Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

THE PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

By D. N. Pritt, K.C., M.P.

OCTOBER 1940 SIXPENCE

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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WE ARE disappointed this month—the Fund is down, although we have waited until the last possible moment, when the printer was clamouring for our copy, in the hope that a last-minute miracle would happen.

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Notes of the Month

Deeper into the Pit of War—Mutual Gangsterism—Rousseau's Vision —Learning with Blood and Tears—The Path of Awakening—No Room for Pessimism—The World Outlook—Three Months of Change—The Crux of World Politics—British Imperialism's Fiasco— Braggadocio and Corruption—What Went Wrong—1914 and 1918— Stalin's Warning Fulfilled—Crisis of the British Empire—Choice of Evils—Britain and Germany—Peace Rejected—Anglo-American Deal—Empires for Sale?—The Letter of the Bond— Anglo-American Antagonism—Alternative Policies—Prolonging the War—The British People's Alternative— Leadership and Organisation—From the Old Order to the New

THE war for civilisation is letting loose daily greater barbarism on mankind. As the capitalist world steps deeper and deeper into the pit of war, so each circle of the inferno appears to eclipse all that preceded, and the end recedes into the distance, dark and unfathomable. Churchill calls on his followers to gird themselves for the campaigns of 1941 and 1942, and hints at the prospect of a "third world war". Hitler calls on his followers to gird themselves for five years of war. The United States arms on a formidable scale for a future stage of the war which has not yet begun. Such is the outlook of the statesmen of capitalism. With every day's events the Communist analysis of the war and of the only solution of the war is being proved and confirmed anew even to the most obstinate ideologues who still cling to the fading slogans which no longer bear any relation to present realities. More and more clearly this war of Empires is revealed as a war of Juggernauts which trample over the bodies of human beings.

IN the temporary absence of a decisive military front, the weapons of air war and hunger blockades are the favoured weapons to prepare the way for a further offensive. The people of Britain and Germany are suffering cruel blows at the hands of their rulers. Europe presents a spectacle of mutual gangsterism let loose (always in the name of "protection" of the victims, who are compelled to pay the expenses and suffer the blows, according to the approved recipes of all gangsterism) in the midst of crowded laborious populations who have already sufficiently difficult conditions of life without these added misfortunes. On each side the war leaders and the Press hound on their people to new efforts of violence and destruction against the other people. while they denounce the infamy and brigandage of the other side. As the blows fall with deepening violence on the common people (never on the war leaders), as the spectacle of barbarism sickens and outrages every human feeling, as the class disparities of the luxuriously protected upper class and unprotected masses force themselves on the attention of all, so the question rises and gathers in the consciousness of widening numbers: How long must we tolerate this? Where will it lead? Where will it end? To these questions it is for Marxism to give the answer in theory and practice.

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In a famous passage Rousseau denounced those philosophers (are they not with us to-day, in every university and pulpit, press sermon, Cabinet Minister's address, B.B.C. talk and W.E.A. lecture?) who seek to rationalise the existing social order, based on the law of the jungle, on organised piracy, as the expression of the principles of social organisation, social solidarity and mutual obligation. He described how their smooth-flowing sentiments lull the understanding and charm the heart, until, as he put it, he almost forgot the pains of being a man in the glory of being a citizen. And then he suddenly transferred the picture to a battlefield (the still so limited battlefields of the eighteenth century): the violence, the cries of the dying, the organised barbarity, the furies and horrors and agonies of men fighting one another in the quarrels of their rulers; the law of the jungle revealed in all its reality as the law of this existing society, to which these philosophers were content to serve as the sycophants and apologists and hangers-on. "Barbarian philosophers!" he exclaimed, "behold your social order!" What would he have said if he had lived to see the spectacle of Europe to-day?

With blood and tears the peoples of Western Europe are learning the true character of the society in which they have lived and in which they have been told to place their trust. Here is the end of the path of all the promises of social reform, of a modern beneficient capitalism, of Fordism versus Marxism, of safe and sure constitutional evolutionary advance, of all the prophets of evolutionary socialism, the embellishers of capitalism, the Social Democrats and Labour Party leaders, who proclaimed their way as the easy way, without bloodshed, without violence, and denounced the way of the socialist revolution, of the conquest of power by the working class. The end of the path is bombs and bloodshed, the uprooting of homes, hunger and blockade and dictatorship—all against which these leaders gave warning as the supposed consequence of revolutionary struggle; all now incurred, as the consequence of their policy, but incurred, no longer in the fight of the workers in their own cause, for socialism, but in the cause of their masters, for the domination of rival masters, to keep themselves in chains.

The experience is harsh; but the price paid brings also its return. If words and warnings have previously failed to teach, experience is teaching. The guns and the bombs of the rival imperialist forces are not only hammering at the foundations of fortifications and buildings; they are hammering at the foundations of their own social order. They are not only shattering at the homes of the workers, but also their illusions. The path which is being trodden to-day is not only the *via dolorosa* of the working people of Western Europe; it is also the path of awakening, of awakening against their real enemies, and to the real struggle, the only struggle in which it is worth while to fight and to die. To hasten and guide forward this awakening is now the urgent task of all socialists, in order that this time it shall not be robbed of its fruits as in the last war, but that the greater maturity of the movement and the greater weakness and inner disintegration of capitalism shall lead to the rapid victory of the working people before the world war will have reached to a scale and horrors far exceeding anything yet known.

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WHAT is the outlook? Terrible as are the sufferings and hardships caused to countless millions of people by the war, we cannot afford to let ourselves be appalled or dismayed by the sum of human misery which is implicit in capitalism. There is no room for pessimism. There is no room for the lamentations of pacifism. We know that, as the crisis deepens, so the call to struggle deepens, the conditions of awakening spread, the tasks of leadership increase. The intensified air warfare has brought the war close to millions, to men, women and children. It has exposed class contrasts with new vividness. The callous egotism of an upper class which provides with elaborate care for its own protection, while refusing protection for the masses, is a spectacle of a degenerate society in dissolution. These class contrasts, the multiplying human tragedies and desperate conditions, the economic burdens now only beginning to reach full weight, the blows of reaction, the bleak and lengthening outlook of the war without perspective, all gave rise to the beginnings of questioning, discontent and anger. But this discontent and anger is still confused, can still be misled, can still be exploited and drawn towards fascist channels, if it is not translated into *political consciousness*. All the economic, social and political consequences of the war create the conditions for fascism, at the same time as they create the conditions for revolutionary awakening. The outcome is not automatic, but depends above all on the awareness, activity and leadership of the politically conscious workers. Therefore we need more than ever, in the midst of the storms and quicksands of the present shifting and deepening crisis, to endeavour to estimate with the most sober objective judgment the forces of the situation, to measure the stage of the war and its perspective, of imperialist relations and of class relations, and on this basis to chart the way forward for the struggle and for the awakening movement.

WHAT is the outlook of the present war situation? Where is the conflict of imperialism leading the world? This is the first question which governs the immediate perspective. Three months have passed since the days of June which saw the collapse of the French Empire and the completion of the first period of the war. In the July Notes in this journal we endeavoured to analyse the main features of the consequent new world situation: the advance of the war towards world war; the laying bare of the world arena for the triangular contest between the three main claimants for world power, Britain, Germany and the United States; the domination of Central Europe by Germany; the advancing activity of the United States, first to complete the domination of Panamerica and second to prepare more and more direct participation in the world war; and the consequent crisis of British imperialism, the largest world Power in possession, in face of its inner weaknesses, difficult strategic situation and advancing challenge of German and American imperialism. This analysis ended with the crisis of policy of British imperialism, reflected in the sharp internal political issues, at the same time as the war advanced towards world war. It is now possible to carry this analysis a stage further in the light of the developments of the past three months.

THE essential character of the world situation by the end of June was that the conflict of imperialism for the new division of the world had reached a high degree of concentration; weaker Powers had been eliminated or sub-

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ordinated, although Japan still continued a regionally independent policy; the three decisive contestants, representing the highest level of capitalist technique and organisation, Britain, Germany and the United States, now stood out more sharply than at any time before, either in the first world war or in the intervening period. The first ten months of the war were revealed as only an opening round, preparing the way for the world war. This first phase had resulted in a preliminary partial redivision of territories, resources and influence between these three Powers at the expense of weaker States, but with the main issue of the redivision of the world still unsolved and driving to extended conflict. Germany had established its domination over the continent of Europe from North to South and from the Atlantic to the borders of the Soviet Union. Britain had suffered a series of defeats, in Poland, Finland, Norway, the Low Countries and France, and had emerged stripped of its allies and in a dangerous strategic situation; but at the same time it had secured control of the gold and shipping resources of the conquered States, of the overseas empires of Belgium and Holland, and even (though not until after a naval bombardment of its former ally) of part of the Navy and overseas colonies of France. The United States had advanced economically in the extra-European markets at the expense of Britain and Germany; had increased its gold stocks by £750 million between September, 1939, and July, 1940; and by the Havana Conference in July and the agreement with Canada strengthened its domination in the American continent and established the claim of American "collective trusteeship" to take charge of former European colonies in America.

THE pivot of the new situation was the deepening crisis of the British Empire and the strengthened advance and challenge of both German and American imperialism. The war plans of British imperialism for the initial phase of the war had gone wrong. The British diplomatists and strategists had calculated on two factors to pull them through, on the basis of which they had entered lightheartedly into the first stage of the war, with no realisation of what was in front. In the first place, they had calculated in accordance with their traditional technique of two centuries past, on the armies of their continental allies, whom they supported financially, to bear the brunt of the war in the first period, while Britain carried through its heavy rearmament, on the basis of the latest technique, only after the outbreak of war, to come in victoriously at the close in the midst of the exhausted other States. In the second place, they calculated (or rather a section of the British rulers calculated) that their pressure on Germany would soon produce its effect and lead to a change of policy and the victory of the "moderate" capitalist and militarist elements, the Thyssens, Fritsches, etc., with whom they were in close contact, so as to make possible a speedy agreement after a carefully limited war, the "switching" of the war against the Soviet Union.

THESE two plans were, in practice, complementary. In the more favourable situation, if the second plan succeeded, the heavy rearmament secured from the working people in the name of the fight against fascism would serve at once against the Soviet Union. If, on the other hand, the change in Germany was delayed, the system of continental allies would secure the time

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to enable the overwhelmingly superior resources of the British Empire to secure final victory and prepare the world counter-revolutionary front on the basis. Hence the lightheartedness and vaingloriousness of all British expression in the first period of the war (the "hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line" period); the easy tempo and comfortable corruption of the armed preparation; the vaunting braggadocio and taunts to the enemy alongside actual extreme disorganisation (the Ironside spirit); reaching to its extreme height during the Finnish adventure with the readiness to consider forcing the pace and taking on two enemies at once.

ALL these plans went wrong, and so completely wrong that this whole preceding period is to-day like an archaic remote echo of a vanished century. The system of continental allies bore no resemblance to 1914. The central pillar of the 1914 system, laboriously constructed in the preceding decade, had been the Russian alliance. Only the combined force of Britain, France and Russia, with the later addition of Italy, had availed with difficulty to hold the front against the superior dynamic force of the more powerful, technically advanced and highly organised German imperialism. It was the Russian thrust into East Prussia in 1914 which led von Moltke to withdraw two army corps from the Western Front and weaken the right flank, and thus broke the Schlieffen Plan and led to the Marne. But the same class outlook which found no difficulty in co-operating with Russian Tsarism from 1907 to 1917 led to inextinguishable hostility to the Socialist Soviet Union from 1917 to the present day. Rather than weaken these basic counter-revolutionary class aims the British reactionaries preferred to go to war with only France and Poland as their allies in place of the 1914 relation of forces.

EVEN in 1914 such a distortion of the traditional British policy would have led to certain defeat. But 1939 was no longer 1914. France and Poland were States in an advanced stage of social decomposition; the French people, who had supported with enthusiasm the Peace Front and the Franco-Soviet Pact had been betrayed by the Daladiers and Blums before the war began; France was dragged into war by British pressure, not only against the will of the people, but also against the will of its ruling class. The result was a speed of collapse which threw all the British plans into confusion and created a temporary legend of invincible Nazi power.

THE alternative plan of "switching" the war failed equally against the superior strength and superior diplomacy of the Soviet Union. Faced with the formidable power of the Socialist State on the one side, and the ramshackle weakness and corruption of the British system of allies on the other, German imperialism not unnaturally preferred to hold fast to the path of non-aggression in relation to the Soviet Union and turn its offensive to the West, after the peace offer, backed by the Soviet Union, had been refused. The intended British-controlled palace revolution in Germany never materialised; instead Thyssen fled and Hitler's armies swept to the Atlantic and the Channel. British policy received its heaviest defeat for generations; the fall of Chamberlain was only the first admission of that defeat. Stalin's warning of the "fiasco" was fulfilled.

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THE crisis of the British Empire, gathering through all the years since the last war, thus reached the most acute intensity with the summer of this year. German imperialism, with superior air power, and dominating all the coasts of Europe bordering Britain, was able to direct its offensive against the heart of the Empire, its ports, seaborne trade, industrial centres and communications. Italy pressed forward the attack in Africa, occupied Somaliland, invaded Kenya and, by September, began the invasion of Egypt. Spain openly proclaimed its unity with the Axis and announced its claim to Gibraltar. Rumania repudiated the British alliance; Turkey played for time. Japan took advantage of the situation to adopt a threatening attitude, arrested British subjects, and secured the closing of the Burma Road and the evacuation of Shanghai. In India, the negotiations with the Congress ended in breakdown. The United States organised the Havana Conference to strengthen its economic and political hold in the American continent, and advanced its first form of claim to the European colonies in America. The socialist sector of the world grew in strength, as the Baltic States passed finally out of British control and their peoples united with the Soviet Union. On every front the months since the coming to power of the Churchill Government witnessed a series of further defeats, retreats and evacuations on the part of British imperialism.

THE consequent crisis of British policy has not been resolved, but has already reached sharper definition of the concrete alternatives in these following months. The British Empire is at once the largest and most vulnerable of the three contestants in the battle for world domination. On the existing relations of strength and still more of potential strength, to expect to maintain unimpaired the domination of one quarter of the world in the face of the challenge of the advancing German and American imperialisms is no longer tenable. Concessions become inevitable as struggle. *The choice before the British ruling class becomes the choice between coming to terms with German capital, at a price, or of coming to terms with American capital, also at a price.* This issue underlies the still continuing conflict within the ranks of the British ruling class. Either alternative means in fact the selling out of the interests of the British people in the desperate endeavour to maintain the world interests of the British bourgeoisie. This issue is not yet finally resolved; although the past three months have seen a marked approach to the victory of one alignment over the other. The weaker British imperialism under conditions of extreme emergency has made heavy concessions to American imperialism to secure its support. The tripartite conflict begins to resolve itself into the immediate confrontation of two camps; on the one side, the German-Italian-Japanese bloc; on the other side, the Anglo-American front, with the increasingly open leading rôle of the United States. This alignment and relationship is by no means stable; but this general pattern underlies the mingled diplomacy and intensified warfare of the past three months.

THE catastrophic events of June were followed by an apparent lull in the advance of the war during July. In fact, the month of July was mainly occupied by feverish diplomatic moves, alongside intensive armed preparation for the next stage. In the first half of July Britain came to terms with

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Japan over the closing of the Burma road. Germany followed with the peace offer which received public expression in Hitler's speech of July 19th. In this peace offer Hitler directed his attack especially against the Churchillian conception of the retreat of the Government to Canada, that is, against the policy of orientation to American imperialism. He proposed peace on the basis of the division of spoils reached, or the mutual recognition of the German Empire in Europe and the British Empire overseas, that is, an Anglo-German division of the world, and threatened that the alternative would be the annihilation of the British Empire. This peace offer was rejected in the broadcast of Lord Halifax on July 22, who proclaimed the principle of the self-determination of nations in Europe (not overseas, i.e., not for the subject six-sevenths of the British Empire), invoked God on his side and proclaimed the war a "crusade for Christianity". Like the Kaiser in the last war, Lord Halifax claimed to have God in his pocket.

THE British rejection of the July peace offer was a political decision pregnant with consequences. It meant in the first place the intensification of the war. But it meant in the second place, as the necessary condition of this, the victory of the Churchill-Beaverbrook alignment of orientation to the United States against the advocates of the Anglo-German deal, and the intensification of the war upon this basis. The *Times* editorial recognised the responsibility involved in determining on the continuation of the war:

> The rulers and people of this country . . . are fully aware of the vast extent of the suffering that must accompany the continuance of the war, and understand the responsibility they must bear in declaring that it must go on to the end.
>
> (*Times*, July 20, 1940).

But the British imperialists recognised that the existence of the British Empire was at stake, and that peace under the existing conditions of defeat would be equivalent to capitulation. Not the principles of the independence of nations, which they more than any have trodden under foot, nor the pious invocations of God and Christianity, but the very real concern for the maintenance of their world possessions drove the British imperialists to the heavy hazard of the continuance of the war. In the objective appraisal of Molotov on the rejection of the peace offer:

> This means that the Government of Great Britain does not wish to give up colonies which Britain possesses in every part of the world, that it is prepared to continue the war for world supremacy, despite the fact that, after the defeat of France and Italy's entry into the war on the side of Germany, this struggle involves considerably greater difficulties for Britain. (Molotov, speech to the Supreme Soviet, August 1, 1940).

THE rejection of the German peace offer in July was followed immediately by close negotiations with the United States for an agreement approximating very closely to the nature of a war alliance. On August 17, President Roosevelt announced that "the United States Government are holding conversations with the British Government with regard to the acquisition of naval and air bases". On August 18 the establishment of the United States-Canadian Joint Defence Board was announced. On August 20, the British Prime Minister, Churchill, described the lines of the

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proposed agreement for the transfer of naval and air bases to the United States on a 99 years' lease. On September 2 the Agreement covering the lease of bases and the transfer of over-age destroyers was ratified (without submission to Parliament or the House of Representatives) by an exchange of notes between the Governments. An act of far-reaching significance for the future of Anglo-American relations, the deepest antagonism of imperialism, had taken place, as it were, on the back of the Anglo-German war.

THE Agreement of September 2 revealed a marked change from Anglo-American relations in the last war. In the last war also the United States gave decisive help to Britain for the final winning of the war, in the ultimate interests of American world hegemony, although the Wilsonian dreams were never realised. But in the last war this help was given in return for promissory notes in the shape of a mounting gigantic debt. The United States was left with paper in its hands. In the first victorious years after the war the American bourgeoisie inflicted a severe debt settlement on Britain (far more severe than on any other European debtors), ignoring the protests of the Balfour note. But when the time came, the British Government, in practice, repudiated the debt. This mistake has not been repeated by the American bourgeoisie in the present war. The initial supplies of goods have only been given in return for solid cash and surrender of securities. And the price of the further Agreement has been this time exacted in the shape of tangible cessions of territory; for, in spite of all the anxious denials of any change of sovereignty ("the British Empire is not for sale," as the *Times* editorial of September 4 found it necessary to insist), the lease for 99 years is equivalent to cession.

A SIGNIFICANT exchange of notes on August 29 preceded the Agreement of September 2. The American Secretary of State, Cordell-Hull, sent a Note to the British Ambassador on August 29, to enquire whether Mr. Churchill's statement in the House of Commons on June 4 that the British Fleet would not be scuttled or surrendered, but sent overseas to defend other parts of the Empire represented "the settled policy of the British Government". Lord Lothian replied in the affirmative. This exchange throws an illuminating searchlight on the political meaning of the Agreement. The speech of Churchill on June 4 was the speech in which he held out the prospect of the British Government abandoning Britain "subjugated and starving" and betaking itself to the New World to carry on the struggle. It is sufficiently evident that this engaging perspective for the people of Britain—which it has since been endeavoured to cover over with glosses and interpretations—would, in fact, mean that the refugee Government of the British bourgeoisie, cut off from their main base of heavy industry and exploitation in Britain would become a satellite Government dependent on the United States, and that the British Empire would thus fall without a struggle into the lap of the United States. This is the perspective to which the United States Government was concerned to tie down the British Government in black and white before it would sign the Agreement.

DOES the Agreement of September 2 constitute a final and decisive landmark in Anglo-American relations? Does it mean that the basic antagonism of world imperialism has been settled without a battle against

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the background of a different war, and that henceforth British imperialism passes slowly but surely into the orbit of the more powerful American imperialism? To draw such a conclusion would be premature. The general trend is evident and inescapable, with the relative weakening of British imperialism and the growing economic, financial and, ultimately, political predominance of American imperialism. The British bourgeoisie have shown their accustomed political skill and flexibility in knowing how to adapt themselves to such a situation, to make a virtue of necessity and to welcome the rising rival as an honoured partner. *But the battle is not over.* The British ruling class are congratulating themselves on the success with which in a situation of desperate emergency they have once again roped the United States into the war and secured its powerful aid to ensure their victory and save their Empire. Once the immediate danger is over they still count on being able to manoeuvre in the consequent situation and maintain their Empire. The American ruling class is still divided, hesitant and suspicious of being again fooled and taken in tow by the more adroit and experienced British diplomats. The economic conflict continues with undiminished intensity. The present Agreement is by no means stable.

THE alternative tendencies in British policy, which have gone to ground for the moment and maintain a discreet silence in public, are by no means vanished or quiescent. Powerful forces of British monopoly capital, which had in the preceding years built up close relations with their opposite numbers in German monopoly capital, still see the future along these lines, once the present conflict can be overcome, and foresee intense economic conflict against American capital. The rôle of Hoare in Franco Spain; the Burma Road Agreement and cordial interchanges with Japan at the same time as the United States was proclaiming its disapproval and disagreement; the cold hostility to the Soviet Union at the same time as the United States was negotiating a new Soviet Trade Agreement; all these indicate the continuing alternative tendency. Nor has it failed to be noted that the Report of the Bank for International Settlements, issued on May 27, 1940, still contained the names of Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England, and Dr. Funk, director of Hitler's economic policy, as joint directors, together with Van Zeeland as Manager of the Bank, and with two other German bankers, three Frenchmen, two Italians, a Dutchman, a Swiss and a Swede as the other directors. The Bank, this interesting joint report in the midst of war points out, "undertakes only such operations as are irreproachable from the point of view both of the belligerent and other countries. In December, 1939, certain rules of conduct which the Bank had as a matter of fact observed since the month of September were codified and brought to the knowledge of its clients".

THE inner conflict of British policy is thus still in fact unresolved, although the present intensification of the war conceals for the time being the conflict. The Anglo-American Agreement of September 2 has enormously intensified the war, and is likely to lead to its prolongation. The United States which holds increasingly the whip hand, is the most interested in driving forward to the maximum and prolonging the European war. The Anglo-American Agreement of September 2 was immediately followed by

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Hitler's speech of September 4 announcing the beginning of intensified air-warfare. The Agreement made it essential for German imperialism to strike quickly before the full weight of American participation should be able to take effect and seal the fate of German prospects. But the intensified air-warfare by no means excludes the renewal of the peace offer; on the contrary, it bears also the character of an extreme form of pressure towards the aim of a speedy settlement. The manœuvres of diplomacy on both sides, and the most violent extension of the war go hand in hand. But the whole logic of the conflict, the depth of the antagonisms and the issues at stake drive forward the rulers, even in the face of their own hesitations and anxieties before the suicidal consequences of their own policies, to continuously deepened, extended and protracted war without end or issue, until such time as the people themselves take their fate out of the hands of their rulers.

THE necessity of such independent action of the British people becomes more urgent with every further development of the war. No section of the ruling class can offer any way of hope for the people. Both the main lines of policy and orientation within the ruling class are disastrous from the standpoint of the interests of the people. Both mean limitless economic burdens and the vista of unending war. Both mean the counter-revolutionary front of capitalism against every movement of liberation, against socialism and the labour movement, and against the Soviet Union. It is not true that the choice before the British people is confined to the rival reactionary policies of the ruling class. On the contrary, there remains the third alternative—the path of real independence of the British people, of independence from all imperialism, of fraternal unity with the working people of all countries in the struggle for liberation, and the winning of peace on this basis.

SUCH independence requires as its condition the independence of all the subject nations of the British Empire—an emancipation that means the freeing, not only of the colonial peoples, but of the British peoples. It requires the ending of the system by which the people are required to bleed and sacrifice in order to defend and maintain the world possessions and exploitation of their masters. It requires the ending of the power of the exploiters and the victory of the working people led by the organised working class. As the war deepens and intensifies, with all its horrors, so this need becomes all the more inescapably urgent as the only way forward to end these horrors and lead to freedom, peace and socialism. The hardships, discontent and anger generated by the development and extension of the war create at the same time the conditions of mass awakening and struggle, given political leadership and effective organisation. The greatest responsibility now rests on the class-conscious workers in the first place to set the example and organise the broad movement of the people; on the militant working-class movement and its leader, the Communist Party.

THE mass campaign which has developed especially in London from the conditions of the intensified air war and the fight for the protection of the people, the sharpened class-consciousness and struggle against the government whose callous neglect of the people is exposed, and the con-

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sequent awakening realisation of the character of the war, has shown the way forward. All the many disparate channels of discontent need now to be gathered together into a powerful united movement against the government of imperialism and for a new government of the working people, alone capable of protecting their interests and leading the way to peace. This aim is expressed in the aim of the People's Convention, the call for which has now been issued. The conditions of agitation and organisation in the coming months are caught up in the maelstrom of war and will have to face many difficulties. But the way of united action and struggle for their own interests and their own aims remains the only way forward for the people. The old order is engaged in dynamiting its own foundations along with the people whose fate has been cast to be born within it. The way is opening for the people to strike out for their own deliverance. That way forward must be and will be found in the face of all obstacles, and will finally prevail against all the forces of reaction and destruction which are at present kindling the fire of the old order.

R.P.D.

Labour Monthly Discussion Groups

Discussion Groups are now meeting in the following districts. Will interested readers please get in touch with us and we will give them particulars.

LONDON

Camden Town
Edgware and Mill Hill
Finchley
Hampstead
Hampstead Garden Suburb
St. Pancras
Stamford Hill
Stoke Newington
Walthamstow
Whitechapel

PROVINCES

Aberystwyth
Barrow-in-Furness
Bath
Birmingham
Bishop's Stortford
Blackburn
Bournemouth
Bristol
Dublin
Halifax
Hyde, Cheshire
Kenton, Middlesex
Minehead (West Somerset district)
Nelson
Newcastle-on-Tyne
Oxford
Pinner, Middlesex
Peterborough
Port Talbot
Portsmouth
Sheffield
Stockton-on-Tees
Sidcup
Waltham Cross, Herts
Warrington
Woodford

SPECIAL GROUPS

London Cab Drivers
Medical (now meeting again)
S.E. London Busmen

The Liverpool Left Book Club continues to devote one meeting monthly to a discussion of LABOUR MONTHLY articles.

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The People's Convention

BY D. N. PRITT, K.C., M.P.

THE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL future of Great Britain raises many urgent problems. One of the most urgent at the present moment, is that of rallying and uniting all the forces that feel the need for a real opposition and a new policy.

This problem has to be studied in the light of the general political situation, which presents a picture of extreme reactionaries in power, widespread popular dissatisfaction, and yet no effective mobilisation of any opposition. We live, of course, under a rule of privilege; wealth is power and power is wealth. A small governing class—efficient at just keeping in the saddle but inefficient in achievement—still dictates the pattern of our lives and deaths; and in the economic sphere that pattern is one of artificial scarcity, imposing hardship on millions. It is imposed because it suits best the narrow interests of the privileged class, which has not learnt to operate plenty save for itself. It is obvious that we cannot achieve peace, keep peace, win security or happiness, or even carry on war efficiently, until the rule of privilege is swept away.

More members of the privileged class than ever before realise, or profess to realise, that their day is gone, and that new forces must take their place; but only political infants would be naïve enough to suggest that the whole class will give up without a struggle, or that the entrance into the existing government of such personalities as Mr. Attlee and Mr. Greenwood will at a given moment work as a delayed-action bomb and drive out the ruling class. For all our sakes, it has to give up its immense power and privilege, and to go ; but it will resist.

This crucial fact, as all recent political experience testifies, is being increasingly realised by the great mass of the people; not only is the proportion of the total mass that takes a real interest in political activity growing daily greater, but the swing to the left among both the old and the new thinkers in politics is also more and more marked, week by week. As the *Economist* wrote on August 24, "no observer of political trends" could "deny that a ferment of social ideas and questionings is already at work, which has not yet been officially seen".

The question arises at once, what is to take the place of the dying army that has ruled so long? When I have dealt with that, I must face the next question; how those forces which want the only true answer to the first question are to be gathered together and united for the struggle.

There is real danger over the first point, for we must not have the tragedy of a wrong or sham succession. The tenacity and stubbornness of the old holders of privilege; the power which they gain from their material resources and their tenancy of the controls of banking and industry; their virtual monopoly of the sources of news and propaganda; the advantages they derive from periodical panics ; the political lethargy which still envelops a section of their victims ; all these ensure that, even as they seem to depart, they will be manoeuvring to secure that in effect those who are called to fill the gap they leave shall be simply themselves under another name. The manoeuvres may take

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many forms. They may seek to give us a gently disguised Fascism, in a bowler hat and an old school tie, with talk of "partnership" between their privileged selves and the masses. They may seek to delude us with the blessings of peace under the patent-medicine label of Federal Union, which will be put forward as guaranteeing "socialism in our time". They may even suggest a bourgeois Transport House "gradualism", moving so gradually that no one can tell whether it is going backwards or forwards. All these possible moves involve infinite danger. Our ruling class is extremely clever at giving way, in appearance or even in reality, at a critical period, in order to hoodwink the forces of progress for the moment of peril and afterwards to recover the whole position; "reculer pour mieux sauter" is an old game.

There is, too, one particular "defence mechanism" which is now being operated; to raise, at the very period when everyone ought to be actively working for the removal of our present rulers, the dangerously plausible cry that you must not swap even the most exhausted of horses whilst crossing a stream; in other words, that you should leave the ruling class in power, not merely to manage the war in its own way but also to mould the future to its pocket's desire. To be deluded by this cry is just an unconscious reinforcement of the efforts of the ruling class to keep in the saddle.

But I think a great measure of optimism is justified, for the mass of the people is growing more aware of the danger. Day by day and week by week they are reminded by the very conduct of the ruling class that its nature is unchanged. Norway, Dunkirk, the internment of anti-fascist Germans and Czechs and of British workers, the Burma Road betrayal, the lack of proper air-raid shelters, the continuance of unemployment, the sacking of militant workers, the Defence Regulations, profiteering, the rise in the cost of living and the faking of indexes, meanness over allowances and pensions, all show that we still have on our backs the mentality and the personalities associated with Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, and Munich, with the Hudson-Wohltat loan negotiations, the Trades Disputes Act, the political prosecutions, the hunger marches. These and many other evils, as serious as they are easily curable at the one price privilege will not pay, build up and keep alive a mass political resentment and consciousness, and create and maintain an insistent demand for a complete change.

This brings me to the second question. Who is to gather and unite the growing opposition? At the very moment when the need for leadership is greatest, when the opportunity of a tremendous advance, a real victory, is unequalled, when a little courage could revitalise the whole people and give them the fire and enthusiasm that alone can face suffering and achieve victory, the great organisations of Transport House, in a mistaken and deceived patriotism which could not be more disastrous if it were deliberate treachery, have abdicated. They have surrendered to the Government; they have achieved responsibility without power—"the privilege", to paraphrase Baldwin, "of the mug throughout the ages"; they are busy not merely in aiding their class enemies to suppress both foreign and British Communists but in gagging their own supporters in order to crush even that criticism which the Government publicly professes to tolerate and even to welcome. (One can even imagine that they wish they still had within the party and subject to its discipline some of the people who a few months ago they thought it so wise—and so helpful to the Government—to expel, and thus to liberate.)

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The disqualification of Transport House is thus clear and complete. It could not lead if it would, and would not if it could. Other ways must be found to unite the mass of the people, including of course large sections of the rank and file of the Labour Party, and develop a definite programme of opposition. How is this invaluable and urgent work being done, or to be done?

Experience is providing the answer. In the last two or three months a new movement of awakening has spread through many parts of Great Britain and led to the beginnings of organisation of the many elements of opposition to the present policy of the Government and the official Labour leadership. Widely attended Conferences have been held, and committees have been formed, which already begin to embody and represent this growing opposition. All these bodies are firmly rooted in the working-class and Trade Union movement; all of them have programmes of the same pattern; and many of them have that certificate of reality and vitality which is nowadays conferred by the attempts of the Labour Party to boycott or disaffiliate their members.

The spontaneity with which this movement has sprung up and the essential similarity of the programmes and demands expressed as well as of the composition of the committees set up shows that they represent a clearly realised need and provide at any rate in part the answer to it.

This growing movement of challenge to the Government is now approaching a new phase and a wider platform with the calling of a great National People's Convention for January. The spontaneous way in which the movement has grown up has meant that its initial forms of organisation have been local in character. It was natural that in the early stages the committees which sprang up all over the country should look for guidance and leadership to the London committee—the People's Vigilance Committee—which was established at an astoundingly successful foundation meeting at the Holborn Hall in the beginning of August. This committee which now has offices at Napier House, 24 High Holborn, London, W.C.1, followed up its inauguration by a rally in Hyde Park, which was attended by 15,000 people, and has since helped to organise meetings all over the country. Through the initiative of this committee hundreds of representative men and women of the Trade Union, Labour and democratic movement from all parts of the country have united to sign a manifesto summoning the People's Convention which will for the first time draw together all the Labour and democratic forces in the conditions of the war for the fight for the urgent needs of the people and for a Government which will realise their aspirations.

The main lines of the policy for which the various organisations in this movement are working are as follows:—

(1) to defend the standards of living of the people;
(2) to defend their civil liberties, and their trade union rights, conditions and practices;
(3) to secure them adequate air-raid protection;
(4) to develop friendship with the U.S.S.R.;
(5) to establish a People's Government;
(6) to work for a People's Peace.

The first two of these six points are things on which the mass of the people are already greatly embittered; they matter greatly and directly to every worker, to every housewife, to every citizen; they matter now, to-day, and

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cannot be put into cold storage during the war, to be found afterwards frozen to death. Yet the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress have in effect abandoned them.

The third point, a need which has been inexcusably neglected, is perhaps productive of more widespread indignation than any other of the government's failures.

The fourth point is vital to our future and to our present. It appeals to ever-widening circles of the population, from left to right. The only sections tenaciously opposed to it are a part of the government and nearly the whole of Transport House.

The fifth point, the fight for a People's Government, is one of fundamental opposition to the present government, and to all parties who support it. It must surely be clear by now that there is no peaceful future for anyone, no chance of a satisfactory ending to the present war, no chance even of ensuring that a new and worse Versailles shall not emerge from the war, unless the present government, overwhelmingly composed of members of the privileged class, and only too fully staffed with the Municheers who have spent years building up Hitler's power, makes way for an altogether different government. This, again, is something for which we must work now, at once; and, again, it is something for which ever more people are realising the need.

The last point, the People's Peace, follows logically on the fifth. Any peace of vengeance, any dictated peace, any peace arranged by our privileged class in its own interests after a military victory, any peace which treats the German people as something essentially sub-human, to be held down in an inferior position whilst the Imperialist system of exploitation remains intact outside Germany, indeed any peace which leaves our ruling class in the saddle, is a perpetuation of evil and a guarantee of future war. Another way must be found, and found swiftly, which will ensure a real peace, an end of war. Only a people's government can achieve such a peace; indeed, no capitalist government could hope to be believed by the people of Germany if it proclaimed its readiness to accept it. For such a peace must be based on an end of that human exploitation which plays such a large rôle in the causing of war; its terms must be an end of capitalist Imperialism, an end of exploitation of man by man and of race by race, a peace of no annexations and no indemnities, a peace that can only be made and kept by socialist governments that have buried the rule of privilege, whether fascist or semi-fascist.

Vigilance and courage can secure for us now, if we do not flinch, the success of a policy and a movement which will lead us to such a real peace, and to a secure and happy future.

I appeal for the widest support of the People's Convention. Only the people can save themselves by their own action.

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Python and Tiger

BY QUÆSTOR

ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS have undergone a change which may not yet be complete, but which undoubtedly is decisive. Whereas twelve months ago the United States were ruled by isolationist sentiment, to-day they seem on the brink of entry into the Anglo-German war, and certainly have taken a number of steps towards it. Fifty American destroyers, of special importance for Great Britain in enforcing its blockade of Germany and Italy, have been exchanged for bases in British territories from Newfoundland to the West Indies. American aeroplanes are pouring into this country at the rate (just revealed by the American technical journals) of 500 a month. An immense number of other arms, including over half a million rifles, were shipped from the U.S.A. to Great Britain immediately after the overthrow of France and the virtual disarming of the British army at Dunkirk. A mutual defence agreement has been concluded between the U.S.A. and Canada, and negotiations for a similar agreement are proceeding (in the third week of September) with Australia. Obviously connected with all these measures, although not formally so, is the decision of the United States Congress to introduce peace-time conscription, under which sixteen and a half million men between 21 and 35 become liable for military service. Simultaneously there is a great speeding-up of armaments production in all its fields, thus making it certain that the United States will be able to implement its pledges of assistance to Canada and Australia, or to play an independent military part in the world if need be.

These are the facts, the consequence of which is inescapable. Great Britain becomes assured of a vast effective reservoir of strength for the struggle against Germany, which could only have been problematical in September, 1939. The United States conscription decision alone gives quite a new significance to the British Government's policy of making this a long war. For the longer the war lasts, the more Germany and the whole world will know that, not only is the hope of a rapid lightning German victory over Great Britain receding, but the more the United States will be in a position to intervene, at the good pleasure of its ruling class, with a crushing superiority of man power as in the last war, multiplied by a still more effective superiority of air power. "The National Defence Advisory Commission", we read in an American publication, "is not trying to equip a limited military and naval force to defend limited objectives—for example, the Caribbean, the Pacific approaches of the Canal and Alaska, or South America north of the 'bulge', or even the whole hemisphere. Unmistakably it is attempting to prepare this country for war on the scale of 1917 to bring about the mobilisation of our full industrial and military resources."

To take one other vital aspect of the military situation, the approach of America to entry into the war practically settles the question of oil resources, without which neither aeroplanes, nor tanks, nor submarines can operate. The U.S.A. and the other American countries between them in 1938 controlled 50.75 million tons of exportable surplus of oil, as against 26.2 million

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tons in all other capitalist countries. Eighty per cent of the German supplies in that year came from the Western hemisphere—all of them lost if America enters the war, while the 67 per cent of British supplies which came from these are still available. Of the rest of the world's production, even if the 4.5 million tons from Rumania all go to Germany, and the 7.2 million tons which came from the Dutch East Indies and Sarawak were to fall by future fortunes of war into the hands of Japan, there would still remain 14½ million tons available for Great Britain in Iran and Irak. Thus—always granted a long war—the American-British superiority in this essential ingredient of the war machine also becomes absolutely crushing.*

The real significance of these facts, however, goes much further than their influence on the present war. We see this very easily if we assume for a moment that Great Britain were to suffer military defeat before America's weight can be cast in full, and the German army were to overrun these islands, with the transference of the Government of the British Empire to somewhere overseas—say to Canada. In this event the growing strength of the United States would safeguard against all comers what probably Germany, even in victory, would be unable to prevent the U.S.A. acquiring, namely, the heritage of a considerable part of the British Empire. Already, as the condition for the destroyers-bases arrangement, President Roosevelt has secured from Churchill a pledge that, in the event of Britain's defeat, the British fleet is to be transferred to the Western hemisphere—to Canadian waters, that is: and, as we know, Canada and the U.S.A. now have a pact of mutual defence. The U.S.A. has already proclaimed that it will not allow the transfer of possessions in the Western hemisphere from fallen European countries to their conquerors. That referred, at the time, to the Dutch West Indies and Dutch and French Guiana. We can imagine what Wall Street and the heads of the American army and navy are saying in private, if even a "progressive" magazine like the *New Republic* could add to this (July 1) that, if the United Kingdom collapsed, the British islands in the West Indies and British possessions in Central and Southern America would pass to the U.S.A. Furthermore, said the journal, the U.S.A. might extend its policy of "the status quo plus force" (which means, being interpreted, the use of force to prevent any but the previous owners from establishing control of their former territories) from the Dutch East Indies to the British Dominions of the Southern Pacific, i.e. Australia and New Zealand. Thus the United States would step into the place of Great Britain for all the widely distributed territories mentioned and, in addition, would be in a commanding position throughout the whole American continent. It would be a bold Axis in that case which would venture to challenge American hegemony of the capitalist world.

But if Great Britain succeeds in defeating Germany, the United States will still be in a position to speak with authority in the new re-distribution of the world, and possibly with greater authority than the British Government itself. The tremendous resources of the United States will be mobilised for war. And not only of the United States. Under the cover of "preventing German economic domination in Latin America", the United States Government has already launched a $500 million fund for buying up all the export

* Moniteur du Petrole Roumain, March 15, 1939.

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surpluses of the Latin-American countries (54 per cent of them went to Europe in 1938, according to the Washington Correspondent of the *Economist* on September 7) and placing them under a fictitious "collective control", about which nothing could be clearer than its direction exclusively by United States financiers. Thus the entire resources of the American continent will be in the hands of American imperialism, armed for war economically as well as militarily.

Parallel with this, as British purchases in the United States extend, must proceed British acceptance of growing financial dependence on the United States. Already there are no non-British States in the so-called "sterling area," created after the last world economic crisis (1930-31): they all base their currencies on the American dollar now. Already, the financial press reports that 75 per cent of the world's gold supplies are in the hands of the United States. At the end of June, United States treasury figures showed that the total Allied resources in the U.S.A. were $\$6\frac{1}{2}$ billions, of which two-thirds were in gold, bank balances and easily negotiable securities—but $\$1\frac{1}{4}$ billions had already been spent during the first nine months of war, according to Sir Louis Beale, an important British trade official in the U.S.A. It is legitimate to suppose that the rate of liquidation of these assets must increase. Perhaps it has some bearing on this fact that, according to City reports, American capital is buying up rubber and tin shares in British Malaya, at the same time as talk becomes more insistent of the Singapore naval base being made available for the United States fleet as part of the defence of Australia. Thus, even if the economic footholds of Britain and the U.S.A., like the military and naval footholds, remain a collective concern, the position towards the end of a long victorious war must be that the leadership in this collective undertaking will be American.

It does not follow that leadership will voluntarily be surrendered by Great Britain. If the fortunes of unequal economic development enable the U.S.A. to take advantage of Britain's political difficulties in this way, it will be all the more probable that British imperialism will put forward after the war every effort in the sphere of diplomacy and intrigue to redress the inequality, just as after the first world war. No imperialism has yet been discovered which voluntarily abdicates before a rival. No doubt it is with this in mind that American manufacturers and bankers are once again subsidising hundreds of local and national Fascist organisations, in the political shadows behind the struggle of the Republican and Democratic parties, while the war scare is being used to key the whole nation up to a frenzied state of jingoism—jingoism which at present is anti-Red and anti-pacifist, but can be switched over to anti-Britishism, should the necessity arise. As for the two main parties themselves, in the words of the joint statement issued by Earl Browder and William Z. Foster on behalf of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., both the old parties have "proceeded full steam ahead on a course of war and preparations for war, on a path of full-fledged aggressive imperialism. . . The most reactionary section of finance-capital, which is at the same time the most powerful and decisive, controls and is represented by both Republican and Democratic parties, both Willkie and Roosevelt. Their differences, so far as the people are concerned, amount to no more than a division of labour, the better to deceive the masses, and to prevent their independent political organisation and struggles, while the chains of

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conscription for bloody war and unexampled exploitation are riveted around their necks."

It is appropriate to describe these scenes from the imperialist jungle in the jungle's terms. For years the python, its immense muscles coiled in seeming impotence around one-third of the globe, has watched impassively the huge and seemingly irresistible hulk of the rhinoceros treading down life of every kind. But the bloodstained brute stopped short at the flaming barrier that marks the end of the capitalist jungle, and shied violently into the python's realms. Immediately the reptile launched itself upon him, bringing coil after coil into play as the rhinoceros' crushing mass threatened to overwhelm it. Now the tiger's powerful fangs and claws are being called into play. Temporarily, the python and the tiger are allies. But whether they can maintain their alliance, if the common enemy is crushed and torn asunder, has yet to be seen.

But such a possible conflict over the spoils of victory is a matter of the future. To-day the two imperialisms are tied up by more than their common hatred and fear of German imperialism. Most obvious common ground of all is their hatred of the U.S.S.R. In organising the world-wide propaganda campaign against the proposed Soviet-Finnish pact in October, 1939, in collecting men and munitions for the Mannerheim gang once Finland had been successfully launched into war with the U.S.S.R., and still more in arranging an international demonstration of capitalist solidarity against the U.S.S.R. at the League of Nations meeting in December, 1939, American and British imperialism ran neck and neck: Ambassador Bullitt in Paris and Lord Halifax in London pulling every string that was available to them. Both countries withdrew their Ambassadors from Moscow at the beginning of the new year, on various pretexts, and both attempted to impose a blockade on Soviet trade. While in Great Britain it was pardonable to think that the country was much more bitterly at war with the U.S.S.R. in these months than with Germany, in the United States it was equally pardonable to imagine that the country had entered the anti-Soviet war even more whole-heartedly than Great Britain. The collapse of Mannerheim's army in March upset the plans of both British and American imperialist aggressors; and they were forced to make the best of their discomfiture, by some semblance of a resumption of trade relations (in the case of the U.S.A.), or of trade negotiatinons (in the case of Great Britain). However, the eagerness with which both Lord Halifax and Mr. Cordell Hull leapt at the chance of stirring up hatred against the U.S.S.R. and of provoking it by flagrant breaches of its rights, when the peoples of the Baltic States set up Soviet Republics and joined the U.S.S.R. (July 1940) should serve to warn the innocent of the savage ferocity with which British and American finance capital continues to eye the first Socialist state—a ferocity in which all secondary quarrels are forgotten.

One particular field in which this unrepressed hostility to the U.S.S.R. is so apparent that it interferes with their own imperialist interests deserves particular mention. This is the Far East. Each fears and rages at the threat to its investments in China, contained in the Japanese invasion. But both understand perfectly well, as they did already when China appealed against Japanese aggression in 1937, that the American navy alone, even though reinforced by the warships which Great Britain can spare, is not adequate for dealing with the Japanese forces. Even if they attempted to limit the co-

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operation to the Chinese national army, they know that popular forces in China are too strong to allow them to restore their former predatory grip on China's vital centres, once Japan is defeated. Moreover, there is good ground for believing that co-operation between the Anglo-American navies and the Chinese army alone would not be sufficient, and they might have to ask for the co-operation of the Soviet Union in restoring peace to the Far East. Sooner than take this fateful step, they preferred for months to propitiate the Japanese. While Great Britain supplied one million tons of oil to Japan, the United States supplied scrap-iron (of which only ten per cent was light scrap, falling under the licensing provisions recently introduced). They sold other munitions of war freely to the Japanese. Britain in July struck a treacherous blow at China's struggle, which under repeated League resolutions, promoted by the British Government it was bound to facilitate, by closing the Burma Road. While the Soviet Union, up to October, 1940, had granted credits totalling $450,000,000 for the purchase of arms, the total credits grudgingly made available by the U.S.A. and Great Britain were $75,000,000 in the case of the first, and £6,000,000 ($30,000,000) in the case of the second. The reward they earned from the Japanese was the seizure of control of Indo-China, and the conclusion of a military alliance between Japan and the Axis. This has provoked further embargo measures from the U.S.A., and talk of re-opening the Burma Road in Britain. But there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that the projected Anglo-American-Australian agreement about the Far East will be anything more than a combination to force Japanese imperialism to abandon part of its anticipated booty in China.

Thus the way out of bloody slaughter and imperialist intrigue at the expense of the peoples does not lie through the now forming Anglo-American bloc. That bloc has the aim of defeating dangerous imperialist competitors in Europe and in Asia, but equally of attacking and if possible destroying the Workers' and Peasants' State of the U.S.S.R. Should a revolutionary Europe arise from the horrible experiences and destruction of the present war, there is every reason to conclude that British and American imperialism will unite against it. Alike in the interests of European, Asiatic and American peoples oppressed by the capitalist system in its last agonies, and in the interests of the first country where the peoples have thrown off the capitalist yoke, redoubled efforts to bring to power a People's Government in Great Britain as a beginning—a Government free from taint of imperialist interests and aims—are not only imperative. They are the only way.

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London's People and the Air War

BY TED BRAMLEY

CHURCHILL'S PROMISE of "blood, tears, sweat and toil" has been fulfilled with a vengeance. For more than two weeks now there has been bombardment from the air, day and night; raids have lasted from half an hour to ten hours. Sometimes there are half a dozen a day and more—and nearly always all night, from dusk to dawn. The raiders come in bright sunshine and moonlight; they come regularly, in cloudy and rainy weather. Bombs of all kinds have been dropped—heavy explosives, aerial torpedoes, delayed action bombs, incendiary bombs and oil bombs—and now landmines. They have fallen on practically all parts of London.

The heaviest attack has been on the industrial districts of East and South-East London, which are the most densely populated working class areas in the world. The raiders' objectives seem to have been quite definitely the big docks, warehouses, railway stations, power stations, factories, and the civilian population.

Buckingham Palace and the West End have also been bombed. This is probably to turn the heat on the bourgeoisie and give the high-up Fifth Column encouragement to go to work for a peace favourable to Hitler.

It is not permitted by the censor, I believe, to indicate the degree to which the bombing has been interfering with production. It is possible, however, to indicate its effects upon the people. The casualties have been published—the numbers killed outright and those seriously wounded. That, of course, doesn't tell the whole story. Many die later—many are wounded but not "seriously". Thousands more suffer in other ways. Thousands are rendered completely homeless. How many, I can't say. One may judge by the fact that the Ministry of Health is requisitioning flats for 20,000 people. Vast numbers have solved the question by going to friends or neighbours. The West End was never so deserted by the rich as at present. As soon as the bombing started you could see the posh cars flowing out westward past our home in Hammersmith.

The Ministry of Health complains that some working-class families obstinately refuse to budge. Naturally—unlike the rich they have to work for their living, and furthermore they have a deeply rooted attachment to their own homes. Nevertheless, there are thousands who are homeless and are moving from shelter to shelter by night and from Tube Station to Tube Station.

Work by day and shelter by night is the practice. The provision made by the authorities was scandalous. Some large number were killed in the East End waiting 48 hours for buses. It was elected to be an unfortunate mistake. Others have been placed in such places as Rowton House, which is a poor man's lodging house. In the case of Hammersmith, I myself saw scores of

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families from Canning Town thrown in with the usual inmates, men, women and children, all lumped together desperately trying to get some sleep.

Large numbers of workers have been rendered workless—sometimes by bombs on the factory, sometimes because the gas has been cut off for some days.

The problem of sleep and transport has become very acute for nearly all people. Raids night after night make real rest impossible, particularly when safety is lacking, due to the absence of safe shelters or reasonable facilities in existing shelters. Each new day brings forth some diversion of traffic or temporary cessation of some service, with the result that travel in London, normally expensive, crowded and tedious, has been made doubly bad in all these respects.

Undoubtedly the biggest problem, however, is the universal desire for safety. People will travel from one end of London to the other to get into the Tubes or a safe shelter. In Stepney, women line up at 12 noon for shelter in the Tilbury Dock at night. In Poplar, I took shelter last week at 11 a.m. and women and children were still inside, having been there all night and day to hold places. East Londoners have flocked to the West End to get shelters like C. & A's, Thames House, etc.

The reaction of the people is very significant. It varies and is a little different area by area, according to the experience through which people have gone. In East and South-East London particularly, there is no other topic of conversation. All energy and thought is first devoted to getting a bit of food, a bit of sleep, and shelter. But at the same time, there is widespread expression of bitter dissatisfaction. Universally they demand better and safer shelters. There are more bitter expressions of class hatred against the rich than I have heard for years. The capitalist press has worked overtime writing up the courage and patience of the East Londoners. The King and Queen have been worked extensively. We have been treated in the Press to appropriate remarks between the King and his people. But the most significant remarks are not reported so widely. The man who shouted "We want —— bomb-proof shelters" and got charged with insulting words and behaviour; the man who, when the King said "My home has been bombed too," replied, "Yes, which one."

Of outstanding significance is the reaction in places like Silvertown. Here, Harry Pollitt had to fight hard to poll 800 votes eight months ago. Last week Churchill had some boos when he visited there. Local residents comment on the remarkable change among the people regarding the war. Everywhere such remarks as "How is it all going to end?" "What good is it to us to reply by dropping stuff on German working people?" "What good will we all be by the time we've knocked each other to pieces?" "What shocking, wasteful destruction!"

And so it grows throughout London as the experience of East London is shared by other areas. The reaction and activity of the working-class movement is profoundly significant. The Labour leaders have been conspicuous by their complete absence and lack of activity. There has been an absolute decline in the authority of the London and local Labour Parties. Unquestionably the policy of collaboration with Churchill and Chamberlain has had the effect of smiting the Labour Party down like a disease.

The people respond like lightning, both in the factories and shelters, the

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Tubes and localities, to those who help them by showing the way to act collectively. And in this the Communist Party has made a great contribution in sharp contrast to the Labour leaders.

Immediately the big attack on the East End took place, the London District Committee issued a clear lead to the Party membership and the workers through the *Daily Worker*, notices to Branches, 100,000 leaflets and 5,000 posters. We raised six principal issues and demands:—

1. The immediate construction of bomb-proof shelters and the opening of all private shelters and the Tube Stations. The provision of lighting, ventilation, seating, bedding and sanitary facilities in all shelters.
2. The provision of homes for the homeless by the commandeering of all empty flats, mansions, places, etc., and the provision of furniture and facilities.
3. The immediate payment of full compensation for furniture, homes, clothing; and pensions for dead and injured.
4. Clear information to the people on what they were entitled to and where to get it.
5. The provision of work for the workless and full payment for all time lost through air-raids.
6. The provision of a sound warning system which would enable people, by night or by day, to reach shelters in good time.
7. Full support for the transport workers in their efforts to safeguard the public by refusing to work the services after warnings.

In spite of difficulties, the three-day delay in delivery of letters and two-day in delivery of telegrams, transport dislocation, etc., we succeeded in conveying our proposals to the membership through eight area meetings of Branch Secretaries and a meeting of Industrial Bureaux. The reaction of our members, in the main, has been splendid. Some of our comrades have been killed, and others wounded. Many, including D.P.C. members and Branch Secretaries have been rendered homeless. In spite of that comrades have stepped forward without hesitation or delay to help the workers solve their many problems. Their work and steadfastness is an inspiration.

Our well-known Communist Councillor Piratin of Stepney has set an example together with Tubby Rosen, the Stepney Tenants leader, in the heart of the bombed area. Instead of seeking for personal safety, as many Labour representatives have done, they have been working day and night, going from shelter to shelter, speaking to the people and helping to organise them. Rosen carried on until the very day he went into the Army.

What these comrades have done, has been done in all parts of London by our comrades. Our District Committee sent a deputation of 10 to the Prime Minister and the Home Office. For three hours—mostly in an excellent air-conditioned shelter—they pressed the six demands mentioned above.

Similarly in localities—Hammersmith, Finsbury, Paddington, Southwark, Hampstead, Stepney, etc., deputations have gone and are going to the Borough Councils and A.R.P. Controllers.

A remarkable development in the fighting mood of the workers has taken place. They are taking a variety of forms of action to get things done. In the factories there has been struggle on the question of taking shelter when the sirens sound, and payment for time lost. In some of the key arms factories, they have compelled agreement, resulting in complete stoppage throughout warnings and full payment for time lost. In others, the battle ebbs and flows.

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For a time, the spotter system is tried because the workers get fed up with being in shelters or are anxious about time and money lost, but with experience of bombs seen nearby, the fight for wages and shelters gets stronger.

The Busmen's delegate conference has twice affirmed its decision to stop after warnings, and has been supported by revision of rules for busmen and trolleybus men.

In other localities the fight for private shelters to be opened has gone on. In St. Pancras they have picketed Carreras and sent deputations to get the shelter (capable of holding 3,000) opened to the public. In Stepney, similarly with Glandfields and Godfrey Phillips. In Southwark demands have been made for the use of an unused tube—similarly in Finsbury.

The sharpest clash has come on the Tubes, which the Government declared would not be available for use as shelters under any circumstances. The masses have just flocked there in thousands, and at certain stations like Warren Street and Goodge Street, swept aside all opposition.

The D.P.C. issued a leaflet in 20,000 copies to those sheltering in the Tubes saying "Stand firm and demand bomb-proof shelters" and advising the formation of station Committees to act together to keep the station tidy, etc. This has in fact been done in several stations, and has been welcomed by the Station staffs.

It has not been welcomed at all by the Government who fear the pressure of the people and the lessons they are learning, not least of which is their own strength and capacity to get things done. Scotland Yard raided the Communist offices to confiscate what remained of the posters and leaflets, thus demonstrating their desire to stifle the voice of those demanding bomb-proof shelters.

Nevertheless, concessions have had to be given by the Government, including the right of the people to use the Tubes as shelters; instructions to local authorities to commandeer private shelters and empty flats; the prompt announcement of rights, and payment of compensation, and the promise of better facilities in shelters. True to tradition, the British ruling class bows to the storm in order to spring back violently as the pressure lessens. They still try to avoid conceding the principle of bomb-proof shelters.

What are the next steps in the battle? The outstanding need of the hour is to bring a great mass of active labour and trade union men and women into the forefront in actual struggle, so that the full strength of the organised Labour and T.U. movement can be hurled at the ruling class. There exists as never before the possibilities of realising in London a fighting United Front of the working class, supported by other sections of the population in spite of the opposition, disaffiliations, etc., of Transport House.

Particularly necessary is the development of co-operation in the factories through the initiative of the Shop Stewards Committees; similarly in the localities the Trades Councils can play a decisive part in drawing together not only the Trade Union Branches, but also the Shop Stewards Committees in the factories and other local organisations.

A great step in the direction of building this united action is the appeal to active Labour men and women by a number of London Councillors. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that the fight for bomb-proof shelters cannot proceed or succeed unless the workers are conscious of the real nature of the Government to replace it by a People's Government. Equally the

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inseparable connection between the imperialist character of the war and the policy of the ruling class, which places profits before the safety of the people, is becoming clear to many people.

The Communist Party in London will proceed with speed and energy to develop the widest understanding of these two great factors, and help the people of London to rally in such force as will enable the forthcoming People's Convention to herald a new Government of the People.

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Trade Unions in the Strait Jacket of War

BY J. R. CAMPBELL

THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS will meet in the fourteenth month of the war, when the civilian population of the warring countries is undergoing unprecedented horror and suffering. Day and night the bombs of the rival Imperialisms are concentrating not on attacking each others' armies but on destroying the industries and the workers which supply these armies. Heavy as the casualties have been both in London and Berlin, it is only a rehearsal on a small scale for what has yet to come.

On both sides the standard of life of the workers has been savagely driven down. In Britain the Government admits a rise in the cost of living to the extent of 4*s*. in the £1. How many workers earning £3 or £4 per week in September, 1939, have received the increase of 12*s*. or 16*s*. per week which would be necessary to maintain the purchasing power of their wages at the September level? For we must never forget that the vast majority of the working population in Britain are not employed on munition industries where they could supplement their normal wages by overtime and Sunday work. A recent survey, undertaken by the *Economic Journal*, is illuminating in this respect.

> In Islington for every working-class family whose income had increased there were roughly three whose income had decreased, and three whose income was the same. Thus, taking the rise in the cost of living into account the great majority of the Islington families were being forced below the standard of living they were used to in peace-time. In Coventry nearly half had increased their income; of the rest 32 per cent had the same income as pre-war, 20 per cent had less.
>
> (*Economic Journal* for July, 1940.)

The noticeable thing about this is not that the general standard of life of the people in non-munition districts had fallen—that we knew—but that the income of half the people in a munition district like Coventry had fallen also (i.e. the 32 per cent whose income was the same, and the 20 per cent whose income had fallen in the midst of a rising cost of living).

Even when we take the "favoured" munition workers we find a situation much different from that imagined by gentlemen who talk glibly about wage profiteering. The above-mentioned survey gives the following facts. Wage rates in metals had increased by 11·4 per cent and in shipbuilding by 7·9 per cent. Compare this with a rise of 20 per cent in the cost of living. Earnings in the metal industries had increased by 7 per cent and in shipbuilding had actually decreased by ·5 per cent.* So even overtime and piecework are not resulting in vastly increased earnings in all munition trades.

* This requires some explanation in view of the increase in wage rates. The fact is that shortages of material and mismanagement have decreased earning power amongst the pieceworking trades in shipbuilding.

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It is in this situation that the Trades Union Congress is meeting. Its strong man, Mr. Bevin, is in the Government, the members of the General Council are busily engaged on various government committees, many of the intermediate leaders are working as full-time officials in the Ministry of Supply. The Trade Union Executives who voted for the coalition Government have five months' experience of its operations to survey.

The Labour Movement went into the Coalition Government on the pretext that it was necessary to prevent the triumph of Fascism in Great Britain. Now no worker will deny the right of the Labour Movement to do all in its power to prevent the triumph of Fascism. Indeed the Communists and the militants generally fought to induce the Labour Party to organise the genuinely anti-Fascist forces in Britain, in order that a mighty barrier be placed in the way of Fascist advance at home and abroad.

But the question which the Trades Union Congress has to consider is whether the coalition of the Labour Movement and the main body of British monopoly capitalism is likely to create such a barrier, or whether it is likely under the pretext of organising the British for the war, to prepare the way for a Fascist régime in this country. For Fascism is the concentrated expression of monopoly capitalism. It was German monopoly capitalism which subsidised Hitler and finally lifted him to power. It was British monopoly capitalism which helped to build up Hitler in the belief that he could be used to attack the Soviet Union. It was the pro-German section of French monopoly capitalism which carried out its *coup d'état* and surrendered France to the Nazis. Yet our Labour leaders would have us believe that British monopoly capitalism is not a pro-Fascist force—presumably because it is British.

The history of coalition governments in recent years shows that they have played a conspicuous part in clearing the way for Fascism. The coalitions of the Social-Democrats and the monopoly capitalists in Weimar Germany, like the recent Blum-Reynaud Coalition in France, tied the workers up with emergency decrees, split their organisations, and prepared the way for the triumph of open Fascism. Is this coalition of British Labour with monopoly capital likely to give any different results?

The apparent basis of the coalition is (1) the Labour leaders accept British monopoly capitalism and agree to assist it to regiment the workers for the effective prosecution of the war; (2) the monopoly capitalists agree to preserve parliamentary and democratic institutions and to co-operate with the trade unions during the war.

There can be no doubt that the first line is being duly carried out. The drive initiated by the Chamberlain Government to reduce civilian consumption in order to provide the necessary resources for the extension of the war machine has gone on with increased energy. In spite of the reduction of the working-class standard of life through rising prices, a Purchase Tax has been imposed. The worker in the munitions industry who has increased his earnings through overtime and Sunday work will have to return a great deal of those increased earnings through the increased income tax. And the financial press assures us that this is only the beginning.

There is no doubt that the rising cost of living, the Purchase Tax, the increased Income Tax will stimulate a powerful movement for increased wages. That is why the Government has hastened to introduce new regula-

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tions making strikes illegal. Under those regulations a trade union sanctioning a strike is liable to have its funds confiscated and workers who participate in a strike can be heavily fined. It is nonsense to pretend that such regulations would be introduced if the Government did not anticipate a powerful wave of working-class resistance to any attempt to further reduce the standard of life.

It will be claimed of course that lock-outs are also prohibited, but then employers are not in the habit of locking out workers in order to secure a change in a national trade union agreement at a time when there is full employment and high profits. But the employer can, under this national arbitration scheme, cut piece-work prices or worsen working conditions, and the workers have to accept this pending arbitration. If they refuse to work under the worsened conditions (pending arbitration) the regulations define this as a strike for which the workers are liable to be punished, and not as a lock-out for which the employers are liable to be punished. Associated with the penalisation of the right to strike there is the power to compulsorily transfer labour from one point to another—now operating in the munitions industry and in docks—in other words, complete industrial conscription. Thus the Labour leaders co-operate with the Government in driving down the standard of life and in seeking to deprive the workers of the means of resisting that drive.

But these facts have no effect on many trade union officials. The unions, they say, are being consulted at every point and are actively co-operating in the war-time economic machinery. Do not many former trade union officials function as inspectors in the Ministry of Supply and in other government appointments? Is this not a guarantee that the workers' interests will be safeguarded in the Coalition Government? It is not. The capitalist class remains in control and capitalist necesssities reign supreme. The war necessitates that the standards of the civilian population shall be cut and capitalists' interests necessitate that the maximum amount of this cut shall be imposed on the working class. For no matter the number of trade union officials who may be operating in the lower organisations of the State economic machinery the fact remains that basic economic policy is determined by the monopoly capitalists dominant in the Coalition Government and that the key points in the State economic machine are manned by the nominees of big business. The trade union official in State service operates on the basis of a policy determined by big business.

This actually hinders the trade union movement from defending the standards of the working class from capitalist and governmental attack. Its main leaders are in the Government which is engaged in cutting down the consumption of the civilian population. Many of its subordinate officials who know intimately how the machinery of the unions can be manipulated are in Government service. It is much easier in this situation to manœuvre the unions into doing what the Government wants them to do than would be the case if the unions remained independent. Many of the union officials not yet in government employment have their eyes open for possible government jobs. They are not likely to strenuously resist the Government from which they are expecting favours. Added to this process of corruption there is the victimisation of left officials. All trade union officials are expected to get special permits to visit Government jobs with a view to organising their

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members. A fair number of officials of left views have failed to obtain such permits. This is of course a direct attack on their position in the union. For if an official is known to be barred from pursuing his organising duties on Government jobs, a certain number of members may contend that he is less valuable to the workers as an organiser. Thus direct State coercion of the workers is supplemented by widespread corruption and intimidation within the movement. The State-influenced trade union leaderships are seeking to undermine the unions from within.

In view of this complete shackling of the trade union movement it is interesting to note the very great place on the agenda occupied by resolutions from the main trade unions calling for a repeal of the Trades Disputes Act:

"This Congress" declares the National Union of Railwaymen, "places on record its complete disillusionment regarding the claims of the National Government to be pursuing the present war in the interests of freedom and democracy, whilst *at the same time it pursues a policy of refusing to repeal the Trades Disputes and* Trade Union Act of 1927."

The N.U.R. does not specify whether it is the Chamberlain or the Churchill Government that is referred to in this resolution. The Transport and General Workers Union wants the act repealed "in view of the increasing duties and widening responsibilities which the trade unions have undertaken," and the Draughtsmen make a similar claim "in view of the Government reliance on T.U.C. collaboration in the present struggle and in virtue of the key positions of the trade unions for the successful defence of national freedom."

Now all these resolutions are symptomatic of the enormous steps towards the State regimentation of the unions that have been taken since the Labour leaders entered the Government. For what does this terrible Act of 1927 do? (1) It makes political strikes an offence. (2) It makes it an offence for a union in one industry to call a sympathetic strike to assist the unions in another industry. (3) It interferes with picketing. (4) It imposes on the unions an irksome method of collecting the political levy.

On the basis of its refusal to repeal this Act, the National Union of Railwaymen doubted the professions of the National Government to be "pursuing the present war in the interests of freedom and democracy".

But when the Labour leaders enter the Government, instead of restoring the lost liberties of the trade unions, they co-operate with the monopoly capitalists in depriving the unions of the liberties which they still possess. In contrast to the Trade Union Act of 1927 the Labour leaders have agreed to (1) make all strikes illegal; (2) make all picketing illegal; (3) retain the irksome method of collecting the political levy. And this fresh attack on trade union rights, extending far beyond that of the 1927 Trade Union Act, was put into operation by means of regulations issued by Mr. Bevin who a few weeks before was chiding Chamberlain for his refusal to repeal the 1927 Act. There could hardly be a more striking contradiction between the aspirations of the union membership and the action of their representatives in the Coalition Government.

On the wages question there is a similar contradiction. The Amalgamated Engineering Union has a resolution on the Agenda which declares—

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That this Congress considers that wages were far too low prior to the outbreak of War. The research of Sir John Orr and other medical authorities substantiate this standpoint. Now due to the increased cost of living, real wages have been reduced. Congress therefore declares its determined opposition to the policy of the National Government which aims to place the cost of the war on the shoulders of the working class. It instructs the General Council to assist and co-ordinate all sections of the movement in their efforts to improve wages and to inform the Government that the trade union movement is determined to improve the low wage standard of its members.

The assertions of this resolution are irrefutable. Wages were too low before the war. The cost of living has advanced faster than wages. What have the Labour Members of the Government done?

They have supported the Government in further cutting working class standards by the imposition of the Purchase Tax. They have supported it in stripping the workers—whom they told to go to it—of their overtime earnings by means of an increased income tax collected at its source.

They have imposed compulsory arbitration in order to make it more difficult for the workers to resist this attack. Instead of co-ordinating the movement to secure wage increases they are throttling the movement in order to ensure wage decreases. There is no doubt that they are defending capitalism to the last ounce of their strength.

But what of democracy? Suppose Chamberlain had come out at the beginning of the war and declared "In order to defend democracy it is essential that I shall have the right to intern trade unionists without trial" what an uproar there would have been in the unions. Yet immediately the Labour leaders enter the Churchill Government it proceeds to exercise that right. Johnny Mason, an active trade unionist, is imprisoned without trial. This case has been referred to as a British Tommy Mooney case or a British Dreyfus case. Mooney and Dreyfus were falsely accused, but they at least knew what the accusations were. Johnny Mason does not know and is unable to offer a defence. No single action of the Government has alarmed rank and file trade unionists more. But the bureaucracy is not only complacent. It is actively defending the right of the Government to imprison trade union members without trial. It has been the sad experience of the writer to read the letters which some trade union general secretaries are sending to their branches in connection with the Mason case. How do the branches know that Mason is imprisoned for trade union activity? Why did Mason not appeal to his union executive in the first place? These and similar questions are addressed by the trade union bureaucracy to their members. There is evidently no need for this government to employ political hacks to cover up their misdeeds. The union bureaucracy are willing volunteers. But all the trick questions of the bureaucracy cannot conceal one elementary fact. Johnny Mason, an active shop steward and trade unionist, is being detained. He cannot defend himself because he does not know what charge has been levelled against him. And the union bureaucracy, fresh from meetings and conferences where it has been ranting about the need to defend democracy, is now covering up this outrageous crime against the working class.

The Trades Union Congress cannot overlook the fact that since the Coalition Government was formed not only is the capitalist class less chary

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of attacking democratic rights but the Labour leaders, refusing to defend their own members, are endeavouring to defend a policy of concentration camps for Shop Stewards.

What has been reached is, of course, not yet full-blooded Fascism but it is a tremendous step on the way. It was a policy of this character which shackled the French working class and made easier the emergence of a Pétain. But the Pétain tactic of capitulation to foreign Fascism is not the only possible variation. One can advance to Fascism on the basis of regimenting the working class for the carrying out of the Imperialist war to the bitter end. This is the policy that the General Council of the British Trade Union Congress is helping to carry out.

We must, however, see that there is a twofold process. The bureaucracy are co-operating with the employers and the Government more openly and unashamedly than ever before. But in the workshops there is a growing resistance to all attempts to worsen conditions. This is coupled with a growing contempt for the ruling class, for the man in the workshop does not treat the débacle of last summer as a failure of supply but on the contrary as a many-sided failure of the whole class leadership of this country. The ruling class feel this. That is why they are at such pains to boost the Prime Minister. The individual who has a little political credit left is pushed forward to occupy the place of the discredited class leadership.

The workers, however, are learning rapidly. They have found a means in the shop stewards committees of uniting the workers in many factories. The next step is how to unite the organised factories on a district and national basis in bonds of indissoluble solidarity. Both the shop stewards representing the will of the workers to defend their conditions and the bureaucracy acting as the agent of the Government in the Labour movement are quite conscious of this central problem. The shop steward wants to reach out from his factory. He does not regard the quarterly meeting permitted by his union as a sufficient link with the workers in other factories. He desires a more continuous association. But the Executives of the unions recognise that the association of the shop stewards on a district and national basis would mean the coming together of a leadership which would challenge the present policy of clearing the way for a British type of Fascism. Hence they are using discipline and threats of expulsion to keep the shop stewards from associating with each other. But the workers will find a way to this objective, as they will find a way to defend themselves even if the right to strike has been taken away.

However, the struggle around wages is only the beginning of the struggle to defend the workers' conditions. For there is a radical difference between a capitalist economy at peace and at war. In a capitalist economy at peace the workers, if they succeed in raising wages will find the shops stocked with the goods they want. Not so in a war economy where government control is deliberately engaged in reducing the amount of civilian goods produced in order to increase the amount produced by the war industries. It is not only possible, it is extremely likely, that the workers will in a war economy find themselves with more money in their hands confronting less goods in the shops, with the consequent result in higher prices, or scarcity and rationing. The fight for wages must therefore be the starting point for a fight for control, for a fight for a People's Government which will take control of

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the economy of the country. In the workshop it is necessary to struggle to take from the employer his arbitrary right to dismiss workmen, to demand access to his books, control of the A.R.P., L.D.V., and welfare arrangements. On a wider field it is necessary to unite all the forces of the working class and the middle class in the struggle for a People's Government without any representatives of capitalism and Imperialism.

How do the unions face up to this question of the Government? The National Union of Vehicle Builders ask Congress to instruct the General Council "to take every step to remove the men responsible for the Munich policy from the Government". But the General Council, through the mouth of Sir Walter Citrine, has already explained that this is impossible. Only if the men of Munich get out themselves or if the Tory caucus decides to withdraw them can there be a change according to Sir Walter.

The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen has a resolution declaring that "the future of the people of this country can only be successfully safeguarded by a Government composed of representatives whose history and record of achievement is compatible with the broadest principles of the Labour Movement". Both those resolutions mirror the discontent of large numbers of union members with the existing Government. The delegates who support them however must be prepared fearlessly to confront the challenge of the General Council which will declare that it is impossible to advance to a new Government unless the Labour representatives leave the present Government. For there is no proof that the Labour leaders are modifying the policy of the present Government in a progressive direction, while there is ample evidence that the present Government is pushing the Labour bureaucracy in a reactionary direction. There is a Government which is driving resolutely to reduce the standard of life of every trade union member and the General Council tries to demonstrate that it would be a dreadful thing if the Labour Movement in deciding to fight for a People's Government withdrew its representatives from that body.

We are writing this article before the General Council has issued its annual report and we do not know what prospect it offers the people at this stage of the war. But the prospect which the British monopoly capitalists with whom it is in alliance are offering the British people is both sharp and clear. It is to endure the bombings until the flow of American munitions and American manhood turns the scale. The British Empire will reach the height of its effort in 1942—the U.S. in 1945 and after that—Victory. The entry of U.S. big business into the war will make the Labour leadership the still more contemptible lackey of monopoly capitalism.

The only alternative to this is to struggle for a People's Government, that will bring about radical social changes in Britain in war-time, that will appeal over the head of Hitler to the German people and the oppressed peoples of Europe, and that will seek co-operation with the Soviet Union. The first way, the Labour leaders' way, is one which leads deeper into the Imperialist war, the second way is a People's way out of the Imperialist war, the way of the European revolution stimulated by the revolutionary struggle of the people of this country. That is the final choice before the Trades Union Congress.

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War on the Workers

BY HENRY MORGAN

THE INCREASED INTENSITY in the bombing of London and other towns in Britain in recent weeks has diverted attention from that other war which is gathering force as each week passes, i.e. the war on wages and living standards of the people.

This attack is disguised as a means of avoiding inflation. According to current capitalist propaganda, the main cause of inflation is increased wages. The typical trend now being put forward is a variation of the following culled from the columns of the *Financial News* (August 27, 1940):

Inflation in war-time proceeds by two well-defined courses. One is the increased revenue accruing to investors as profits rise and the other is the augmentation of the income of the wage-earning classes. The first has been effectively dammed by the excess profits tax. The flow along the second continues unchecked.

There are two mis-statements in this short extract: The first is the suggestion that the excess profits tax is seriously checking increases in profits; and the second, the assertion that the wage-earning classes are in receipt of an increased income. Excess profits tax is a fraud as was pointed out in these pages last month and evidence is accumulating (e.g. the Coventry and Finsbury Survey) which goes to show that not only the real earnings but also the money earnings of the working-class in Britain are below the pre-war level.

The alleged danger of inflation ensuing from increased wages is, then, the visible form which the threat to working-class standards is taking. In actual fact, the attack is many-sided; the ruling class are using every means at their disposal, even recent military and economic disasters to achieve an aim planned long before the outbreak of war.

The British working-class movement, following the opening up of the war and the German conquest of Europe, is faced with an entirely new set of conditions. There are three main changes in the situation:

1. The rate of war expenditure increased at once by 50 per cent and is still rising.
2. Large export markets were lost. Europe now under Axis control took 30 per cent of Britain's exports in 1938. The attempts to compensate for this by developing trade with overseas markets of the European countries affected are not likely to be very effective, owing to United States and Japanese intervention, and growing production in the Dominions.
3. The British blockade, now extended to the whole of Europe, cuts off the primary producing countries from the biggest market and impoverishes them as buyers. At the same time partly owing to transport difficulties, partly to lower British consumption, imports from these countries are restricted.

The trade unions, in particular, will have to re-cast their ideas about the war and its consequences. The situation is perilous. The conditions of the people are at stake.

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Let us try to set down the results of these changes in the situation:

1. There has been a strengthening of inflationist tendencies.
2. There have developed more sweeping attacks on workers' standards in Britain.
3. Unemployment and under-employment is increasing.
4. Impoverishment of the middle classes is growing.
5. Growing difficulties in the colonies.

The list is formidable. Failure to consider its implications will end in disaster.

It will be recalled that at the beginning of the war bourgeois economists calculated the amount of reductions in living standards necessary, with a given war expenditure, as a quarter, a third or forty per cent, a figure given by R. W. B. Clarke, a liberal economist masquerading as a socialist. These figures were based on a war expenditure of £3,000 million and assumed an increase in production. Expenditure is much higher, over £3,500 million and probably approaching £4,000 million, and all the available information points to a drop in production. As we have indicated, in other ways the position is now less favourable, so that 40 per cent is probably an under-estimate of the cut the capitalist class is now aiming at. It is as well to face the fact.

The Government is certainly going ahead with its plans for reducing the supply of consumption goods. In April-June, 1940, imports of food are down in volume compared with the same period in the previous year. The supplies of cotton goods to retailers are cut to two fifths of pre-war, rayon to two thirds and most household and durable goods cut by a third. The imposition of the purchase tax which will operate shortly is designed to restrict still further consumption of a wide range of goods.

There are two principal ways in which the policy of the capitalist class can be put into operation, (1) by raising prices and (2) by directly cutting and taxing wages. In practice, of course, both methods are used.

The method of raising prices is much easier to put across; a direct cut in money wages of say 40 per cent is obviously dangerous politically. There are difficulties in price-raising, largely because it does not differentiate between incomes, with the result that a dangerously low standard may be reached by the lowest-paid workers, while the highest-paid are above the minimum "iron ration" designed for them. This difficulty has been partially overcome by "managing" the level of the various internal prices with subsidies, so as to keep relatively low the price of a limited range of cheap foods.

But a rise in prices is not enough. In order to prevent a corresponding increase in wages control of wages and employment has been introduced, with the object, if not of cutting wages at any rate of preventing increases. It is this side of ruling-class policy with which the Labour members of the Government have been specially entrusted. There is also talk of a new cost-of-living index based on the "iron rations" necessary to maintain life. It is reported that such an index is being prepared by experts at the Ministry of Labour. *Reynolds News* makes the following comment on this project:

> It must be for the Government to decide, in consultation with the trade union and employers' representatives, whether the "iron ration" index shall be used to govern the many wage-rates dependent on movements in the present cost-of-living index figure.

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Here is a dangerous threat to wage standards. Moreover, recent awards of the National Arbitration Tribunal are significant. The claim of the Bank Officers' Guild for extra pay, on the basis of a cost of living sliding scale for all permanent and temporary members of the staff of Barclays Bank was rejected by the Tribunal on September 26.

Difficulties are also arising out of the award of the Tribunal in response to the claim put forward by the printing unions. In this first case heard by the Tribunal, a claim for a 10*s*. bonus resulted in an award of 5*s*. This award may have to go back to the Tribunal because employers interpret the agreement in a way which is not acceptable to the workers in the printing trades.

The outlook before the working-class calls for drastic treatment. The coming autumn and winter promises to bring the most acute suffering and starvation to wide sections of the population, unless the active and clear-minded spirits in the labour movement can generate such activity as will lead to a complete reversal of ruling-class policy in Britain. For not only is there the direct and conscious attack on working-class standards, but the economic situation, in certain trades employing large sections of the labour force in Britain, has so deteriorated in recent weeks that a first-class economic crisis is imminent.

The coal industry is in desperate straits. Between mid-June and mid-July unemployment increased by 26,000. More than 75 per cent of the normal export markets have been lost to the country says the *Statist* (September 7, 1940). The sunshine stories about the prospects of capturing new markets are apparently not well founded. The same journal's remarks on this topic are worth quoting:

> The most hopeful quarter for the expansion of oversea sales is South America, but here the opportunities are restricted by substantial inroads of the United States into the trade since the outbreak of the war, made largely by contracts over extended dates. So far, it is American coal, and not British, which has displaced that of Germany and Poland. North American shipments to South America increased by 400,000 tons in the last four months of 1939, and by a further 550,000 tons in the first four months of 1940.

In the cotton industry, reports the *Statist* :

> Home trade business has been thoroughly disorganised by the restriction upon the consumption of textiles at home.

Unemployment has increased and many firms are working short time. While firms were working on Government contracts hours were increased to 55½ a week, but the industry has again reverted to the normal 48 hour week. Cotton exports to Europe have virtually ceased and apart from the competition of the U.S.A. and Japan, the impoverishment of the colonial peoples already referred to is bound to affect purchases of cotton goods in these areas.

The woollen textile industry is also feeling the effects of the collapse of France and the German occupation of Scandinavian areas and the Low Countries, which were good markets. Other trades which have been affected include hosiery, boots and shoes, clothing trades and distribution, where many smaller shops are closing down and others must soon follow.

The outlook, then, is one of gathering economic difficulties and behind these difficulties the continuous drive of the British ruling class to reduce workers'

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standards and, as they see it, this means the introduction of the corporate state, in short, of fascism.

A circular issued by a well-known firm of London stockbrokers was discussed in the *Financial News* on September 10th in which it is stated that a number of "controls" introduced to meet war-time needs will almost certainly remain after the war. Moreover, after the war, the circular adds, everyone will need to be content with a lower standard of living. The London Passenger Transport Board, with its fixed, guaranteed dividend is put forward as an example of the type of " public control " which should be widely introduced after the war. Such controls, it is held, may be extended to banking, electricity, gas, railways, coal, iron and steel and heavy engineering.

Here then is the blue-print for the corporate state in Britain. And for the workers there is the prospect of "a harder post-war world". On this point the circular is worth quoting at some length :

> Although the Labour leaders in our present Government are exhibiting a magnificent power of leadership in the furtherance of our war effort, even to the extent of abandoning many cherished trade union principles, they have not yet shown sufficient courage to apply any form of compulsory saving to wage-earners, although some scheme of this kind is not only necessary to prevent inflation, but also to teach economy and to prepare the minds of the public for a harder post-war world.

This is a very different picture from that presented by the theoreticians and spokesmen for the official trade union and Labour movement. But it is the bankers and the big industrialists who are in control of the economic and political life of the nation. It is their plan that is being operated today. The task that has been set for the Bevins, Attlees and Morrisons is to undermine the power and strength of the workers' organisations. That is the true meaning of a mass of legislation designed to hamstring the trade union movement, and thus prevent it functioning as a fighting organisation of the working-class.

The coming autumn and winter will be decisive on the economic front. The Trades Union Congress meets at a time that is fraught with danger to the masses of working-people organised in its ranks. The delegates assembled at Congress must face the fact that every development in the war intensifies the class conflict. The ruling class in this country still rules and so long as this is the case, its ideals and not those of the working-class will prevail.

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Britain's Allies for "Liberating" Europe

BY RICHARD NIXON

ON 21ST AUGUST a Bill was passed in the House of Commons, the Allied Forces Bill, whose aim was "to give legal sanction to the establishment of no less than six foreign armies on British soil." (Poland, Norway, Holland, France, and Czecho-slovakia). In speaking to the Bill, Sir Edward Grigg, Under Secretary of State for War, one of those most responsible for the scandalous mass interning of anti-fascist refugees, said: "The Bill represents I believe, the inmost aspirations of at least 100,000,000 human beings at present under the Nazi heel. Britain at this proud hour is no mere home for helpless refugees. Britain, on the contrary, is a cave of Aeolus in which are penned for the time all the great liberating winds which, through the centuries have swept the dark mists of oppression and barbarism from the life of human kind. This wind may be penned for a time, but not for long. I am confident, that the day will come, brought nearer by this Bill, when this wind will sweep across the English Channel and the North Sea and drive out the foul miasma in which millions of our fellow human beings at this time are drawing every breath in misery and in pain."

(Official Report, August 21, 1940; col. 1354/55).

Though not always so confident, the debate was full of information. Similar "Freedom Armies" were demanded for the Germans, Austrians, Jews and Abyssinians. There was, however, no discussion about the fight of other Africans or of Indians against *their* oppressors. Certain M.P.s were disturbed about the extra-territorial rights granted to foreigners on English soil for the first time in English history, and would have preferred to see a proper foreign legion set up. When Sir Edward Grigg pointed out that one could not deal with "Sovereign Governments" in such a manner, he only made matters worse. Colonel Wedgwood commented drily: "That is all very well, but we are financing all the officers and the men. The whole thing is financed by us." Sir Joseph Nall examined the Bill from the point of view of constitutional law, and came to the conclusion that "These foreign Governments are not *de facto* governments on any territory of their own. They are societies or assemblies of friendly foreigners temporarily domiciled in this country." (Official Report, 21.8.40, col. 1407.) At the end it was agreed that for political reasons it would be better to call the British Foreign Legion "Allied Armies" and the "Assemblies of friendly foreigners financed by us," "Allied Governments."

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This masking of paid agents as "Allied Governments" is an important addition to the numerous inner-political measures carried through by the British ruling class to minimise the effects of the desertion of the French Bourgeoisie to the camp of German Fascism. Through the catastrophes in

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Norway and Flanders, and the unmistakable significance of the events in France, the man on the street began to lose some of his illusions about the "anti-fascist" character of the war, and even began to doubt whether the British ruling classes were capable of leading the war to a successful conclusion. Under these conditions, it was an important addition to the inclusion of the Labour Party in the Government when Churchill in his report on the war situation on August 20th, could declare: "The Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Dutch, the Belgians are still in the field, sword in hand, recognised by Great Britain and the United States as the sole representative authorities and lawful Governments of their respective States. . . . . Our old comradeship with France is not at an end. In General de Gaulle and his gallant band that comradeship takes an effective form." (Official Report, 20.8.40, col. 1168.) In the papers, stories of the heroic deeds of Allied Pilots appear regularly. In the streets of London only experts can differentiate between the different foreign uniforms, and in the newsreels each week every one can see with his own eyes at least two or three foreign armies marching around. They do not seem to be marching anywhere, and some of these armies are so small that regular visitors to the cinema know most of the soldiers by sight, but nevertheless they are brought as a symbol that the oppressed people of Europe are flocking under the English banner. And it is almost as important that this symbol is presented to the United States as well. Not for the preservation of the British Empire, not for the safety of the interests of American capitalists shall the Yankees come over again; no, but like their fathers, they are to fight for the liberation of the small nations of Europe.

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It would, though, be an under-estimation of the allied Governments to see in them nothing but the instruments of British Propaganda. Three of them—the Dutch, the Belgian and the French—are diplomatic weapons of the English Government in the fight for the colonial Empires of the collapsed states. France was the possessor of the second largest, and Holland the third largest colonial Empire in the world, and even the riches of the Belgian Congo are not to be despised. The simplest case is that of Holland. Even when the Dutch Government was still in the Hague, its colonial Empire was already under the protection of British capital and the British navy. To-day the formal preservation of a Dutch Government in London is one of the necessities to postpone an open fight between England, the U.S.A. and Japan over the Dutch East Indies, one of the richest and most desirable colonial territories. The transformation of the Dutch Government—Dutch political leaders being replaced by directors of British-Dutch colonial companies—was officially described as an adaptation of the Government to its new tasks. Contrary to this, the position of the French is particularly difficult. So fully has the French Bourgeoisie gone over to the camp of German Fascism that the English, in spite of all their efforts, have not yet succeeded in retaining one important politician or military man on their side. They had to be content with the comparatively unknown General de Gaulle. His "army" consists almost entirely of a few companies of Foreign Legionnaires, and even of these, as Colonel Wedgwood stated in the House of Commons, the majority are conscripted International Brigaders and Spanish Republicans, who are forced to remain with him. The French have either returned to France, or

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are waiting an opportunity to do so. Consequently General de Gaulle is referred to in the Allied Forces Bill as a "foreign authority" and not as an "Allied Government". How important it is to uphold the banner of "Free France" is shown by the fact that it was possible to attach the important African colonies to "Free France" and not directly to the British Empire—a difference which will be important in furthering the fight in other French colonies.

The position of the Belgian Government is even more complicated. As in 1914, it left Belgium for France. This time, however, things are different from then. Larger and larger parts of the Belgian Bourgeoisie go over to the German side, and their Government is still in Vichy, and does not know whether to go to London or return to Brussels. In the meantime the Belgian Congo is surrounded by "Allied" territory and if the Government in Vichy decides to go home, then Mr. Jaspar in London will have to found a "Free Belgium" and the Congo will remain true to the Allied cause.

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So far so good. But behind the transparent mask of "Allied Armies and Governments", behind the diplomatic jugglings around the colonial territories, begins the real problem. Clearer and more threateningly than during the war of 1914, the ghost of social revolution is rising during this war. Before the war of 1914 lay a long period of prosperity, a period of becoming rich, of increasing self-confidence of the Bourgeoisie, a period of taming the working-class movement. In spite of this, the war ended with a series of revolutions, which could only be suppressed and diverted in Central Europe. Between the two wars lies a period of deepest crisis for the Capitalist world, only seldom broken by short years of boom. The self-confidence of the ruling class has disappeared. The difficult, but consequently even more convincingly glorious rise of the Soviet Union in the same time, the increasingly revolutionary mood of the working masses in Europe and America and their alliance with the awakening colonial peoples has put in its place a panic fear of "Bolshevism". The fight against all forms of "Bolshevism", against the Soviet Union, against all that is progressive in Europe and America, against all movements for freedom amongst the colonial peoples, is the underlying driving force of Bourgeois-capitalist politics in the whole period between the two wars. This applies in particular to the City of London, the oldest citadel of world capitalism, about which such a terrible fight is going on now.

Already in 1927, Comrade Stalin wrote in an article, "Notes on Contemporary Themes":

> British capitalism always was, is and will be, the most vicious strangler of the popular revolutions. Ever since the great French Revolution at the end of the 18th century down to the Chinese revolution that is now in progress, the British Bourgeoisie has always stood in the front ranks of the butchers of the liberation movement of mankind. . . . . But the British Bourgeoisie does not like to fight with its own hands. It has always preferred to wage wars through others.

In the 13 years that have passed since then, the British Bourgeoisie have seen to it that these remarks of Stalin have retained a contemporary meaning. No Fascist was too Fascist, no reactionary too reactionary, no murderer too bloody that he did not have the open or secret support of the gentlemen

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of the British Empire. Already at the beginning of March, 1938, Comrade Manuilsky warned these "diplomats" with words that sound almost prophetic to-day:

But the British reactionary Bourgeoisie are digging their own graves with their predatory plans. By secretly supporting Japanese aggression in China, they are paving the way for the ousting of Britain from the Far East; by their concessions to Italian Fascism they are paving the way for the loss of Britain's position in the Mediterranean; by granting loans to the fascist aggressors, they are augmenting the latter's military might and the chances of their own defeat. By strengthening German fascism they are paving the way for the partition of their own Empire. By their plans of attack on the U.S.S.R., they are paving the way for the collapse not only of fascism, but of the entire capitalist system". (Report of Maunilsky, 18th Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B)).

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The Bourgeoisie has lost its faith in the old "democratic" methods of Government. That is the new factor in the situation which without this is very similar to 1914. In a speech to Petrograd workers and soldiers in March, 1917, Lenin characterised the two imperialist opponents as follows:

England, a state which owns a great part of the globe, the wealthiest state in the world; which created this wealth not so much by the labour of its workers, as by the exploitation of vast colonies, by the vast power of the English banks which, constituting a numerically insignificant group of three, four or five giant banks, stand at the head of all the other banks, controlling hundreds of billions of rubles and controlling in such a way that we can say, without exaggeration, there is not a spot on the whole globe that this capital has not laid its heavy hand on; there is not a patch of land that is not enmeshed by a thousand threads in the net of British capital."

(Lenin, "War and the Workers," Little Lenin Library, page 9.)

With certain modifications caused by the rising of the United States, that is still the case to-day in the Capitalist world. Still correct, too, is the characterisation which Lenin then gave of German capitalism:

On the other hand. . . . . stands another group of capitalists even more predatory and more piratical—a group which came to the capitalist feasting-board when all the places had been taken, but which introduced into the struggle new methods of developing capitalist production, better technique, incomparable organisation. . . . . This group introduced the principle of state capitalist production, uniting the gigantic forces of capitalism with the gigantic force of the states into one mechanism and amalgamating tens of millions of people in a single organisation of state capitalism.

(Lenin, "War and the Workers", Little Lenin Library, page 10.)

What Hitler added to this was the application of these "gigantic forces of capitalism with the gigantic forces of the state"; not only as a weapon in the imperialist re-division of the world, but much more than it was possible in the old Kaiser empire, he used these forces as a weapon to keep down the workers, to overthrow the threatening revolution. And it is just this which attracts so strongly the dying capitalisms, despairing even of their right of existence, also of his opponents. That is the ultimate reason why in 1914 the world's banker, England, with the states of the world following her in hordes, could fight against the newcomer, and why in 1940 England stands alone,

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afraid of allies of their opponent in their own camp, in their own Government, and in their own Parliament.

* * * *

Only against this background does the miserable farce of "allied Governments" and "National Councils" and their "armies" and other cheap products of émigré-politics show up clearly. They are part of the attempts of the London bankers to make a fifth column of their own. In the "Times" of August 13, the plan is developed to its full extent as follows:

We have already our own potential Fifth Column all over Europe—the army of those who long for the overthrow of the Nazi oppressor. They have a real contribution to make to our victory. But we must speak to them in terms, which they understand. The old slogans are tarnished and faded. Self-determination brought neither bread nor peace in the 20 years after 1914. To-day we need a more concrete appeal.

According to the rest of the article, the "more concrete appeal" consists in England widening the blockade of foodstuffs by buying up all surplus products in the world, and promising the starving people of Europe that as soon as they have overthrown Hitler they shall have them. "'Bread and freedom' has been the motto of more than one revolution. It should become the watchword of the revolt of Europe against the Nazi domination." So closes the article. Since when, the theme has been played with thousands of variations by all sections of British propaganda. In his speech of August 20, Churchill described the whole programme in the following few words: "We shall do our best to encourage the building up of reserves of food all over the world so that there will always be held up before the eyes of the peoples of Europe, including—I say it deliberately—the German and Austrian peoples, the certainty that the shattering of the Nazi power will bring to them all immediate food, freedom and peace". (Official report, 20.8.40).

A proper bankers' plan! One can see the profits staring out! In the name of the freeing of the peoples of Europe, not only will piles of money be earned, but the fight against American competition in the world market taken up, and as by-product, there will be revolution in Europe against Hitler. He who goes farther with the revolution than British interests dictate will get none of the food, and besides will be shot. For the first the British bankers and for the second the British agents, organised into "Governments" and "armies", are there. In a similar way the Central European revolutions of 1918 were suppressed and canalised. Now the whole of Europe is to be freed in this way.

It is an excellent plan to exploit all possibilities of "revolutionary" propaganda. As an "ad hoc world organisation", "world federation," and even "world revolution", H. G. Wells praises it in a Penguin special, "The Common Sense of War and Peace, World Revolution or War Unending." The English "left socialist" Gollancz, and the German "left socialist" Miles collaborate and the result is a "victory book," "100,000,000 allies if we choose", a particularly clever cloaking of Churchill's plans. Lord Beaverbrook lets young enthusiastic journalists write about "war of liberation" and "international civil war" in his papers. Even Sir Edward Grigg makes speeches on "liberating winds, penned in Great Britain". In short, the city of London is trying to incite Europe to a revolution by waving a red banner.

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The plan may be excellent for the glutted world markets of corn and meat, cocoa, etc., and there, no doubt, it will be a "liberating wind". But it will not be bought up so cheaply on the market of history. When revolution is on the cards, the people of Europe look in another direction.

In Germany, at the start of this war, there was a fairly influential section of the ruling class which would have preferred to fight with the Western powers against the Soviet Union and thought, like their friends in France and England, that this was the wrong war. Hitler's successes have silenced this group. From their leader, Fritz Thyssen, nothing has been heard since the capitulation of France. They will probably turn up again with setbacks and defeats of Hitler.

The revolutionary forces in Germany are grouped around the Communists, the heroes of the illegal fight against Hitlerism, the heirs of the revolutionary traditions of the German working class, and the representatives of the strong influence of the Soviet Union amongst the German people.

In France it is a moot point whether the Daladier-Gamelin clique or the Laval-Weygand clique is more despised. Positive, though, are two things: firstly, that General de Gaulle is looked upon as a tool of England's and has no following at all in France; secondly, that the Communists warned the people of France beforehand of the betrayal of the French Bourgeoisie, and fought against it, and immediately took up the fight against the foreign conqueror. In the fight for their national and social freedom, the French people are flocking to the banner of the French Communist Party.

Little is known of the revolutionary movement in Italy, but nobody maintains that they are friendly to Britain.

In Spain, Franco stands or falls with his masters in Rome and Berlin.

In Czechoslovakia, Munich is not forgotten. The Communists were the only party which did not capitulate then, but organised a struggle against its results. And now the Soviet Union is near—nearer than in 1938.

The example of West Ukraine and West Byelo Russia is having a great effect upon the peasants of Poland. In the whole of South-West Europe, the ruling classes have under them very unquiet peasants and workers, who have sprung into movement again through the events in Bessarabia and Bukovina, and who look to the East, and wait for their turn.

In Scandinavia, broader and broader masses are seeing through the dirty trick that England played on them during the Finnish war.

That is the Europe over which Hitler rules—full of revolutionary forces and tensions, and full of hopes in the growing strength of the Soviet Union, but without a single ally in the city of London. These gentlemen have no allies, they only have paid agents. The revolutionary forces in Europe are not their fifth column. They are their enemies, as they are Hitler's.

* * * *

A short survey of the "friendly assemblies of foreigners, financed by us," which are presented to the world as "Allied Governments," proves this even more clearly.

The most respectable are the Norwegian and the Dutch. Not only while one has the support of a great merchant navy, and the other a great colonial Empire, but also because they have their king and their queen with them. But even with these strong traditional bonds, it is doubtful how long it will be possible for them to represent living political power in their own countries.

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Not even a rump Belgian cabinet has found its way to London up to now.

On the rôle of General de Gaulle, the most important things have already been said. The *Times* of September 12 in putting more concretely the plan of buying up the foodstuffs, describes him with the usual openness of capitalists when they feel at home, as the representative of those French colonies who have attached themselves to the British Empire.

The Polish Government had its origin in the cafés and bars of Paris. It is not even a proper continuation of the "colonels'" government of Beck and Rydz-Smigly, and their only basis is the recognition of the English Government. They have become notorious through their anti-semitic paper published by one of their members in London, through a declaration of war on the Soviet Union, made by the "foreign minister", and a parade of refugees dressed as soldiers, to celebrate the 20 years' old "Miracle of Warsaw," the saving of the Polish landlords from the Bolshevists by the French General Weygand.

The Czech "Government" is even more remarkable. It was only born here in London. All its members, with Benes at the head, are those who, at the order of England and France accepted the Munich agreement, and in all important points have carried it out. In different stages of their people's catastrophe, they slipped out, two of them only after they had served the Hitler régime for many months. How these people, two years after Munich, can take the lead under the command of the same masters, and attempt to lead their betrayed people in a "fight for freedom" without blushing is not easily discoverable. The indignation even amongst the refugees was so great, that as a safety measure against an exposure of this shamelessness, not only some of their leading Communist Czech M.P.s and journalists were imprisoned, but there was no other solution but to intern a full third of the Czech "soldiers" coming from France, as they refused to serve under this Government. What the people of Czecho-slovakia thinks of the politicians of Munich, will be shown by history.

These are the officially recognised "Governments". The others who try to get themselves "recognised" come from the darkest lumber-room of European history, like the men of "Kaiser" Otto of Hapsburg, and a doubtful German "Geheimrat", and "leaders" of long-forgotten parties and sects, which for years have had nothing more to do with German politics, but a great deal to do with Allied Intelligence services.

All that is left is the miserable remains of the 2nd International which has stayed in London, and which under the sharp control of the Labour Party, gives itself great pains to paint the war-mongering propaganda with an "international-anti-fascist" tint. They make no secret of their dream to be once again the White Guards of the European revolution and a second time, with the help of foreign arms, to save Europe from "Bolshevism" and for capitalism. Basically they are more despairing than their capitalist masters. Indicative of this is that social-democratic members of the Czech "Government" have enquired of Communist refugees whether, if they behave decently, they would have a chance to be allowed to return to Soviet Czecho-slovakia. One can never know.

* * * *

This comparison between the growing revolutionary forces in Europe supported by the Soviet Union, and the miserable agents of the city of

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London has a deep significance for the British people. As long as they allow themselves to be fooled by the propaganda machine of the city of London, as long as they allow themselves to be towed along by the Bourgeoisie, it only has a dreadful alternative: either to be betrayed like the French people, and to come under the heel of a foreign conqueror, or to be misused in a new counter-revolutionary suppression of the peoples of Europe by the masters of the British Empire. There is no "War of Liberation" possible under the leadership of the Bank of England. The way out of this dilemma is the fight against the exploiters of the English working class, against the oppressors of the colonial peoples of the British Empire. The war of liberation must start at home, and in this war the people of Europe will be the allies of the people of the British Empire.

BOOK REVIEWS

England's Revolution

The English Revolution 1640. Three Essays, edited by Christopher Hill. (Lawrence & Wishart. 2*s.* 6*d.*)

IN A PERIOD when autocratic government robs the people of the rights and liberties so dearly fought for during the last century, it is important to remember similar phases in our history and to learn from them. Three hundred years ago the people began a fight against brutal oppression, a fight which led to civil war, a fight which has not yet ended.

The bourgeois world to-day is silent about these events. No book is published to commemorate them. The bourgeois world dare not remember its own young and vigorous past; it dare not transmit its experiences to the present generation. It is left to the Labour movement and to its most active publishers to remind us of our past fights for freedom.

The first of these three essays is written by the editor. Mr. Hill has a very sound knowledge of many problems of seventeenth century England, and has done much original research on agricultural questions of that period. It is not astonishing, therefore, to find not only useful material but many valuable comments and interesting sidelights in his study. But one must disagree, I think, with his interpretation of the course of political events and of economic conditions and movements which lead up to the Civil War. He speaks of "the new economic facts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [which] made the feudal economic and social system unworkable" (pp. 13–14), of "the development of the capitalist mode of production within the structure of feudalism" (p. 22), and he says that before the Civil War "the structure of society was still essentially feudal; so were its laws and its political institutions" (p. 25). This characterisation is not new but it contradicts that which Marx and Engels and other students of English history have given.

Marx, for example, says quite clearly that he regards British society not only immediately before the Civil War but already in the sixteenth century as definitely bourgeois, that is, capitalist. He writes to Engels in 1858: "We cannot deny that bourgeois society has been for a second time living through its sixteenth century, a sixteenth century which I hope will sound its death-knell as surely as the first brought it into life". While capitalism developed within the framework of dying feudalism from the fourteenth century it became the dominant element in the sixteenth and gave society as a whole a capitalist bourgeois character. And indeed, whether we study agriculture

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or manufacture or commerce, whether we look at the political leaders of sixteenth century England (the Walsinghams and Cecils and Cromwells) or whether we read the new literature, we find the capitalist spirit victorious. Marx is right: the sixteenth-century society is a bourgeois society.

Perhaps Mr. Hill has brought to light new material which was not available to Marx and Engels? But one does not find it in his study; on the contrary, one notices, without surprise, that he has considerable difficulties in interpreting events in the light of his fundamental characterisation of sixteenth and pre-Civil War seventeenth-century society as feudal.

Thus, he says that during the Tudor period it was "the function of the monarchy to see that the inevitable acceptance of bourgeois demands did the smallest possible harm to the ruling class" (p. 38). Since when are the demands of an oppressed class—as a bourgeois capitalist class under feudalism must be—to be inevitably accepted? The French bourgeoisie before 1789 could tell another story. Of course, they would not have to be accepted and the ruling house of the ruling class would have opposed them to the last or it would have been disposed of by the ruling class—if English society *had* been feudal under the Tudors. But Marx rightly points out that it was not feudal, it was bourgeois, and, therefore, the demands of the capitalists are executed and encouraged by the monarchs, who also are capitalists.

Elizabeth was not a feudal monarch bowing to the demands of an oppressed capitalist class. She was the most prominent capitalist in capitalist bourgeois society—comparable to Leopold of Belgium, one of the greatest colonial investors in the nineteenth century. Engels speaks of the Tudor "ex-feudal landowners" as "the first bourgeois of the Kingdom." (*Socialism, Utopian and Scientific:* introduction.)

In order to claim sixteenth-century society as feudal, Mr. Hill, whenever he finds an opportunity, under-rates the capitalist elements and exaggerates the importance of feudal remnants. One of the foundations of capitalism, for instance, is the exploitation of "free" labour, of the proletariat. Mr. Hill says: in 1640 "there were few proletarians (except in London)" (p. 36). It is true, the manufacturing proletariat was not very large, but Mr. Hill forgets that there existed a large agricultural proletariat—Marx speaks of "great numbers of masterless proletarians" as victims of the capitalist methods of agricultural production, and if there were many workless proletarians one cannot say that the whole class of proletarians were "few in number".

True, there still existed feudal strongholds in the country, and under Charles I there was a counter-revolutionary movement. But that does not make sixteenth-century or pre-Civil War seventeenth-century England feudal. The Civil War of 1642 began as a war against the counter-revolution, was a necessary bloody suppression of feudalism joined by certain treacherous bourgeois groups (e.g. some monopolists) in order to keep the bourgeoisie in power.

The two essays dealing with problems of ideology are very valuable, though it seems that Miss James in her "Contemporary Materialist Interpretations of Society in the English Revolution" occasionally confuses simple materialism with Marxist dialectical materialism. Edgell Rickword's Milton is a little gem.

P. F.

Lessons of History

Marxism, Nationality and War. A text-book in two parts, edited by Dona Torr. Part I, Nationalism and Imperialism. Part II, National Wars, 1848–71. (Lawrence & Wishart). 2*s*. each.

DONA TORR has here put her fine scholarship to a very timely task. As the old capitalist world comes down in ruins the inadequacy of bourgeois historical and political science to grapple with the new conditions becomes daily more glaring. The intellectual world, as well as the political world, is in dissolution. We must renew our minds or perish. It is true that much of the confused expression of opinion that now pours forth from the press and on the air is the result of deliberate dishonesty as well as ignorance. But apart, from that, one must recognise that even among men of good-will the capacity to think clearly about current

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political events is dangerously rare, and, even among those who have consciously separated themselves from the old dying world and are actively working for the new, the level of theoretical understanding of the period through which we are passing is often low. As a remedy for these weaknesses Dona Torr's new book is invaluable.

Her plan has been to make extracts from the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin (many of them from sources difficult of access) and, by brief introductions and notes, set them in their historical context and bring out their theoretical significance. She thus enables us to follow the thoughts of the creators and chief exponents of the Materialist Conception of History as they grappled with the concrete conditions of the main historical events of their time. The fundamental conceptions of nationalism and imperialism, their relation to the development of monopoly capital, and the proper strategy and tactics to be employed by the proletariat in the class war, are elucidated in close connection with such topics as the French Revolution of 1848, Britain's rôle under Palmerston in the East, the unification of Italy and of Germany, the first world war and the emergence of the Soviet power. The material is excellently selected and presented with scholarly care. And though the book consists so largely of extracts, they have been so thoroughly digested by the author that the total effect is that of a fresh presentation of a splendid theme by a vigorous and independent mind. The book may be read through quickly with profit, but it will yield much more if made the basis of systematic study in small groups under expert guidance.

In the middle of the last world-war a brilliant and candid American writer gave us, in *The Education of Henry Adams*, a glimpse into the crisis in the intellectual life of the time. With wit, erudition, and passion he proclaimed the paradoxical view that historical events move with accelerating velocity, that the world process gathers speed, and that its *tempo*, in the first decades of the twentieth century, had already outstripped the feeble capacity of human wits and left man intellectually incapable of helping himself. The book was significant as being a piece of honest pessimism, far removed from the cheerful irresponsibility of recent bourgeois historians who deduce from history only one lesson, that history can teach us nothing. But the pessimism is unjustified. Events now move with a speed that makes even 1914–18 look stagnant, yet a Marxist may genuinely boast that their general direction has long been distinctly apprehended with a clarity sufficient to serve as a satisfactory guide to planned political action. Such an understanding of events is, in fact, a basic element in the education of the socialist sixth of the world. The justification of such an educational policy rests upon the claim that in the Materialist Conception of History a genuine science of history has been found. It is a tremendous claim, and, if true, marks an epoch in human culture. Dona Torr's book will enable the reader to see how well the claim has stood the test of a hundred years of history.

B. FARRINGTON

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